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Stone River.  
Brief Notes on One of the Great Battles  
Of the Civil War.

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Ed. Leader: After Bragg's Army had been defeated at Perryville, Ky. On Oct. 8, 1862, Buell's army returned and raised a siege at Nashville, Tenn. Bragg fell back slowly towards East Tennessee, taking with him a long 40 mile long wagon train loaded with plunder captured in Kentucky.

The federal government was dissatisfied with Buell's failure to intercept Bragg, and upon Buell's arrival at Nashville he was relieved of his command which was conferred upon Gen. W. S. Rosecrans. The army was organized and formed the 14<sup>th</sup> Army corps, commanded by Gen. Geo. H. Thomas. "The 20<sup>th</sup> was commanded by Gen. McDowell McCook and the 21<sup>st</sup> by Gen. T. C. Crittenden.

Bragg had taken position near Murfreesboro, about 30 miles out of Nashville, and Rosecrans moved on that place to attack him. Bragg had at the same time completed his preparation to resume the offensive and had begun his advance towards Nashville; and the two armies encountered each other at Stone River near Murfreesboro on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December. They were of about equal numbers, something near forty thousand in each army. The line of battle was formed with the 14<sup>th</sup> Corps resting on the Nashville and Murfreesboro Pike, a short distance north of Stone River, the 20<sup>th</sup> Corps on the right and the 21<sup>st</sup> Corps on the left. The right wing was attacked in force early on Wednesday morning. Many of the men were at breakfast and the artillery horses were being taken to water. So sudden was the charge that the men were thrown in to confusion and they were driven back before the men were in line. Re-enforcements were rushed to that point but there had been such havoc in the start that the whole right wing was driven back.

Our division occupied a position near the right wing of the 14<sup>th</sup> Corps and lay in line of battle under a desultory fire until about 10 A. M. Some of our men were killed and wounded there and when we were ordered back we were almost surrounded; so that when we turned our backs on those in front we commenced firing at the butternut legs in our rear.

The cedars were thick on this part of the field so that our artillery had some great difficulty in getting out and some of the caissons were left behind. We did not move far to the rear until we moved by the right flank, forming in line of battle, so that we received the attack of those who had been in our front and rear. We made a stand before leaving

the cedars but the odds were against us, so we continued to retire slowly. There was a cornfield of something like four hundred yards across between the cedars and the Nashville and Chattanooga railroad. While we were falling back across this field Gen. Rosecrans, commanding the First Division, came to our colonel and asked him to charge the cedars, as he had given orders to change the position of the First Division so as to receive the enemy's advance in a front position. The colonel consented and Gen. Rosecrans passing by our colors towards the front raised his hat and the 18<sup>th</sup> started on the charge with a yell. We gained the cedars, causing a check in the rebel advance, having the desired effect which Gen. Rosecrans sought, for which the regiment was complimented by him in his report of the battle. Our stay in the cedars was only temporary, but it gave us an opportunity to fire several rounds, and I judge was quite effectual as we could see nothing but the blaze of their guns as we crouched under the boughs and fired low. We could not have been over a hundred yards apart. I with a few others, did not hear the bugle sound the retreat and when someone looked out saw the regiment in full retreat across the cornfield. When I started I felt that I should be better off if I did not have so much to carry and thereupon I unbuckled my belt, thinking I would throw off my gum coat and blanket. Then a thought struck me that I should not get across that field without being hit, as it seemed to me every corn stock around me was being hit. I buckled up my belt as I ran and reached the railroad and was safe behind its embankment. Our regiment had been badly cut to pieces. Many of our men had been left where we lay in line of battle all morning, where we cut our way out through the cedars and where we made the charge in the corn field.

Our company lost fully two-thirds in killed and wounded. Some were only slightly wounded and soon returned and were in line again. The whole right wing had fallen back and their line of battle was at right angles to what it had been in the morning with the reserves along the railroad which aided in stopping the assaults of Bragg's forces.

Bragg telegraphed to Richmond that he had gained a great victory but he did not say it had been gained by great loss to his army. He thought to cut us off from our communication with Nashville and his cavalry did make some inroads on our supply trains, but our cavalry was soon master of the situation. There was not much fighting on Thursday the time being spent in rearranging lines on both sides.

On Friday it was evident to the rank and file that there was to be fighting on the left of our line of battle. On a bridge about a half mile south of the railroad and overlooking Stone River were massed one hundred pieces of artillery. Crittenden's Corps was on our left. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon the confederate forces that had been forming all morning advanced down the slope on the other side of the river, Breckenridge's Division in advance. As soon as they got in range our artillery belched forth, making the ground fairly shake. We could see gaps made in their ranks as the shot and shell knocked great holes through them, but they were quickly closed up from their reserves and on they came. When they had advanced to too close range for the artillery the infantry went forward. The whole line advanced in front of the artillery and commenced firing, pouring into their ranks a sheet of lead which staggered them for a moment, but on they came until it seemed as if it would be a hand to hand encounter. Our line was fresh and firm, and before we reached their lines they broke and were driven

back, leaving the ground thickly strewn with their dead and wounded. Darkness put an end to our pursuit.

Thus virtually ended the fighting. The next day there was some skirmishing, and by Sunday Bragg's army was in full retreat.

On Monday the Army of the Cumberland passed through the town of Murfreesboro and took position south of the town. I was left with a detail with hundreds of others to bury the dead. We buried both the blue and the gray, digging deep long trenches and placing those of each regiment by themselves in the order of companies. Those trenches were dug fully three feet deep and names of each man, as far as could be ascertained, was placed on a list numbering from right to left. Over these fallen heroes we spread the U. S. blanket and then mother earth. Now there is a beautiful National Cemetery kept by our government.

Stone River was a battle that had the effect of opening the eyes of the southern people to the fact that a Northern Yank was pretty nearly as good a soldier as a Southern Reb, and that there must be some mistake about the boast that one southern man could whip three northern men. The battle was fought on Bragg's chosen position and we were left masters of the field, not by superior numbers but by superior soldiery.

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