



COL. P. SIDNEY POST.



LIEUT. COL. C. H. FREDRICK



LIEUT. COL. CLAYTON HALE



MAJ. J. M. STOOKEY



DR. H. J. MAYNARD.



ADJ. FRANK CLARK



CAPT. MINNE



CAPT. J. C. HENDERSON.

## THE HISTORY

OF THE

# FIFTY-NINTH REGIMENT

## ILLINOIS VOLUNTEERS,

OR A THREE YEARS' CAMPAIGN THROUGH MISSOURI, ARKANSAS, MISSISSIPPI, TENNESSEE AND KENTUCKY, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY, TOWNS, SKIRMISHES AND BATTLES—INCIDENTS, CASUALTIES AND ANECDOTES MET WITH ON THE WAY; AND EMBELLISHED WITH TWENTY-FOUR LITHOGRAPHED PORTRAITS OF THE OFFICERS OF THE REGIMENT.

BY DR. D. LATHROP.

STONES RIVER N B	
REC'D 8/23/23	
#56	RP

HALL & HUTCHINSON,  
PRINTERS AND BINDERS, INDIANAPOLIS, IND.  
1865.

## CHAPTER XXV.

On the morning of the 27th, every thing being in readiness, the division moved out, taking the direction of Nolinsville, which is nine miles from camp. The day was not so pleasant as was desirable, but the men were willing to march, and did not mind the rain and mud to be encountered.

Lieut. Colonel Frederick started out with the regiment in the morning, but having poor health, soon fell back to an ambulance and returned to Nashville. Major Winters was at home, on leave of absence, and Captain Hale, the ranking Captain in the regiment, was also absent. The command, therefore, fell to the lot of Captain Paine, of company B. Captain Paine was a strict disciplinarian, and commanded one of the best drilled companies in the regiment. His strict discipline and peculiar way of punishing his men, had procured for him the name of "Buck and Gag." Captain James M. Stookey, being the next ranking Captain assumed the position of Major. By this arrangement, company B was left to the command of First Lieutenant J. R. Johnson, and company E, to the command of Lieutenant Goodin.

Soon after leaving camp, the Fifty-Ninth was sent in advance as skirmishers. They soon came across the rebel pickets and began skirmishing. As the Fifty-Ninth advanced, the rebels in front of them fell back to the town of Nolensville, where it seems they intended

(188)

to more severely contest the ground. Here they had a battery planted, and threw several shells at our men before they could get one in position to reply. As soon, however, as a shot or two was fired from a twelve pounder, placed in range, the rebels withdrew on double quick, and the Fifty-Ninth took possession of the town. As the regiment was advancing across an open common, between the woods and town, a volley was fired at one of the companies from the windows of a large frame house, in front of them, without doing any injury. Colonel Pease, of General Davis' staff, saw the shooting, and being close to one of our guns, ordered the cannoneer to plant a shell into the house. This gun had been instrumental in silencing the rebel battery, and was within good range of the house. The first shell exploded within one of the upper rooms, doing wonderful execution among the furniture and tearing the plastering and casing into a thousand fragments. This brought the rebels to light, and a volley from the company sent them howling to the woods. The second shell passed through the hen house, scattering chickens and feathers in all directions, and continuing on its course, burst in the rear of the fleeing rebels. The town was now in possession of the Fifty-Ninth, but to the right heavy skirmishing continued, and the regiment passed on in that direction. Heavy skirmishing continued until the enemy were driven to the opposite side of "Big Gap," about four miles south of Nolensville. Darkness now prevented any further pursuit, and the army went into bivouac. The loss in the division was light, the Fifty-Ninth not having a man hurt. Several of the enemy were killed and a few taken prisoners.

Colonel Pease, while sitting on his horse, directing

by a body guard of one company of cavalry. Next followed Colonel P. Sidney Post, commanding brigade, with his staff, and then the four regiments of his brigade, closely followed by a six gun battery. Then followed the other brigades in the same order. While the column was passing, General McCook and staff came dashing by in magnificent style. They came, they were seen, and they were gone. General McCook is a good commander, but like most of his rank, he prides himself on *being* General McCook. While looking at this well appointed corps, the heart swelled with emotions of pride, to think that there were so many noble-hearted men willing and eager to meet in deadly contest the enemy who were attempting to destroy their country.

The 29th and 30th were spent in reconnoitering and skirmishing with the enemy, General Davis' Division terminating its movements by getting into position Tuesday evening, on the left of McCook's command, near Wilkerson's Creek. The Fifty-Ninth Illinois Regiment occupied the left of Colonel P. Sidney Post's brigade, and the extreme left of the right wing of the army. The enemy had fallen back to their chosen position, about two miles from Murfreesboro', and the Fifty-Ninth Illinois lay on the ground all Tuesday night, within five hundred yards of their line of battle. The night was quite cold, and the ground saturated with water. Without blankets or fires, the men shivered through the night. Company G, commanded by Captain Starkey, was stationed to the right of the regiment, and somewhat in advance, as picket-guard. This continued the position of the regiment until the rebels made the attack, Wednesday morning.

General Rosecranz marched from Nashville, with

forty-five thousand men, and one hundred and two pieces of artillery, and skirmished all the way to the battle field, the enemy resisting bitterly. The whole of Tuesday was spent in reconnoitering. The enemy was found strongly posted, with artillery, in a bend of Stone River, his flanks resting on the west side of Murfreesboro'.

The center also had the advantage of high ground with a dense growth of cedar masking them completely. Their position gave them the advantage of a cross fire, and General McCook's Corps closed in their left on Wilkerson's Creek. Negley, of Thomas' Corps, worked, with great difficulty, to the front of the rebel center. Rousseau's Division was in reserve. Crittenden's Corps was posted on the comparatively clear ground on the left, Palmer's and Van Cleve's Divisions in front, in the woods, and held in reserve.

A battle was expected all day Tuesday, but the enemy merely skirmished and threw a few shells, one of which killed Orderly McDonald, of the Fourth United States Cavalry, not ten feet from General Rosecranz. That afternoon the Anderson Pennsylvania Cavalry, on McCook's flank, was drawn into an ambushade, and its two Majors (Rosengarten and Ward) were killed.

Crittenden's Corps lost four killed and two wounded that day, including Adjutant Elliott, of the Fifty-Seventh Indiana, severely wounded. McCook's loss was about fifty. The same day the rebel cavalry made a dash on our rear, at Lavergne, burned a few wagons, and captured thirty-five prisoners. That night dispositions were made to attack the enemy in the morning. After dark the enemy were reported massing upon McCook, obviously to strike our right wing. This corresponded with the wishes of General Rosecranz, who

instructed General McCook to hold him in check stubbornly, while the left wing should be thrown into Murreesboro', behind the enemy.

At daybreak, of the last day of December, everything appeared working well. Battle had opened on our right, and our left wing was on hand at seven o'clock. Ominous sounds indicated that the fire was approaching on the right. Aides were dispatched for information, and found the forests full of flying negroes, with some straggling soldiers, who reported whole regiments falling back rapidly. Meantime one of McCook's aides announced to General Rosecranz that General Johnson had permitted the three batteries of his division to be captured by a sudden attack of the enemy, and that that fact had somewhat demoralized the troops. This was obvious. The brave General Sill, one of our best officers, was killed, General Kirk severely wounded, and General Willich killed or missing, besides other valuable officers. General Rosecranz sent word, pressing General McCook to hold the front, and he would help him. It would all work right. He now galloped to the front of Crittenden's left, with his Staff, to order the line of battle, when the enemy opened a full battery and emptied two saddles of the escort. Van Cleve's Division was sent to the right, Colonel Beatty's Brigade in front. The fire continued to approach on the right with alarming rapidity, extending to the center, and it was clear that the right was doubling upon the left. The enemy had compelled us to make a complete change of front on that wing, and were pressing the center.

General Rosecranz, with splendid daring, dashed into the fire, and sent his Staff along the lines, started Beatty's Brigade forward, some six batteries opened, and

sustained a magnificent fire. Directly a tremendous shout was raised along the whole line. The enemy began to fall back rapidly. The General himself urged the troops forward. The rebels, thoroughly punished, were driven back fully a mile. The same splendid bravery was displayed in the center, and the whole line advanced. Meantime the enemy made formidable demonstrations on our left, while they prepared for another onslaught on our right. Meantime orders had been issued to move our left upon the enemy. Before they had time to execute it, they burst upon our center with awful fury, and it began to break.

Rousseau's Divisions were carried into the breach magnificently by their glorious leader, and the enemy again retreated hastily into the dense cedar thickets. Again they essayed our right, and again were driven back. This time the number of our stragglers was formidable, and the prospect was discouraging, but there was no panic. The General, confident of success, continued to visit every part of the field, and, with the aid of Thomas, McCook, Crittenden Rousseau, Negley and Wood, the tide of battle was again turned.

Early in the day we were seriously embarrassed by the enterprise of rebel cavalry, who made some serious dashes upon some of McCook's ammunition and subsistence trains, capturing a number of wagons, and artillery ammunition was alarmingly scarce. At one time it was announced that not a single wagon-load of it could be found. Some of our batteries were quiet, on that account. This misfortune was caused by the capture of McCook's trains. About two o'clock the battle had shifted again, from right to left, the rebels discovering the impossibility of succeeding in their main design, and suddenly massed his forces on the left, cross-

ing the river, or moving under high bluffs, from his right, and for about two hours the fight raged with unremitting fury. The advantage was with the enemy for a considerable length of time, when they were checked by our murderous fire, of both musketry and artillery. The scene at this point was magnificent and terrible. The whole battle was in full view, the enemy deploying right and left, bringing up their batteries in fine style, our own vomiting smoke and missiles upon them with awful fury, and our gallant fellows moving to the front with undiminished courage, or lying flat upon their faces to escape the rebel fire until the moment for action. There was not a place on the field that did not give men a satisfactory idea of the manner of hot fire, solid shot, shell and minnie balls, which rattled around like hail. Rosecranz himself was incessantly exposed—it is wonderful that he escaped. His Chief of Staff (noble Lieutenant-Colonel Garesche) had his head taken off by a round shot, and the blood spattered the General and some of the Staff. Lieutenant Lyman Kirk, just behind him, was lifted clear out of his saddle by a bullet, which shattered his left arm. Three Orderlies, and the gallant Sergeant Richmond, of the Fourth United States Cavalry, were killed within a few feet of him, and five or six horses in the staff and escort were struck.

Between four and five o'clock the enemy, apparently exhausted by his rapid and incessant assault, took up a position not assailable without abundant artillery, and the fire on both sides slackened, and finally ceased at dark, the battle having raged eleven hours.

The loss of life on our side is considerable. The field is comparatively limited. The whole casualty list that day, excluding captures, did not exceed, perhaps, one

thousand and five hundred, of whom not more than one-fourth were killed. This is attributed to the care taken to make our men lie down. The enemy's loss must have been more severe. But among our losses we mourn such noble souls as General Sill, General August Willich, Colonel Garesche, Colonel Minor Millikin, First Ohio Cavalry; Colonel Hawkins, Thirteenth Ohio; Colonel McKee, Third Kentucky; Colonel Gorman, Fifteenth Kentucky; Colonel Kell, Second Ohio; Lieutenant-Colonel Shepherd, Eighteenth Regulars; Major Carpenter, Nineteenth Regulars; Captain Egan, First Ohio Battery, and his two Lieutenants, and many more.

When the battle closed the enemy occupied ground which was ours in the morning, and the advantage theirs. Their object in attacking was to cut us off from Nashville; they almost succeeded. They had played their old game. If McCook's corps had held more firmly against Hardee's corps and Cheatham's, when he fought, Rosecranz's plan of battle would have succeeded. At dark they had a heavy force on our right, leading to the belief that they intended to pursue. Their cavalry, meantime, was excessively troublesome, cutting deeply into our train behind us, and we had not cavalry enough to protect ourselves. The Fourth Regulars made one splendid dash at them, capturing sixty-seven and releasing five hundred prisoners they had taken from us. The enemy took a large number.

"General Rosecranz determined to begin the attack this morning and opened furiously with our left at dawn. The enemy, however, would not retire from our right, and the battle worked that way. At eleven o'clock matters were not flattering on either side. At twelve o'clock our artillery, new supplies of ammuni-

tion having arrived, was massed, and a terrible fire opened. The enemy began to give way, General Thomas pressing on their center, and Crittenden advancing on their left. The battle was more severe at that hour than it had been, and the result was yet doubtful. Both sides were uneasy, but determined. General Rosecranz feels its importance fully. If he is defeated it will be badly, because he will fight as long as he has a brigade. If he is victorious, the enemy will be destroyed. At this hour we are apprehensive. Some of our troops behaved badly, but most of them were heroes. The enemy seem to number as many as we, and perhaps more. General Joe Johnson and General Braxton Bragg are in command." Thus writes a correspondent of the Cincinnati Commercial.

When the enemy surprised General Johnson, the Fifty-Ninth Illinois was under arms and ready for the conflict. Had the attack been made on General Davis instead of Johnson the ground would have been held and the inglorious stampede of the right wing prevented. The attack was made at the only point in the Union lines where the rebels would not have met with a warm reception. Some of the boys were captured while at the Springs after water; some at their fires while cooking, and some of the artillery-men were surprised while watering their horses.

The attack was manfully resisted in front of the Fifty-Ninth Illinois until Johnson's Division had doubled back in confusion on Davis, and the enemy was forcing Davis' right so as to threaten the rear of Post's Brigade, when Colonel Post ordered a retreat. Reluctantly and in good order the regiment moved back, occasionally throwing a volley into the ranks of the pursuing enemy, which held them in check until General Rous-

seau's command came to the rescue. On its retreat it passed the point where our brigade battery had been in position. One gun of the battery had been left behind still in position, for the want of horses to pull it off the field, some of these having been killed. The men, by permission, left the ranks and soon run it out of danger of falling into the hands of the enemy. As soon as reinforcements arrived the Fifty-Ninth ceased its retreat and advanced again upon the enemy. They were driven back and the regiment went into bivouac north of the Murfreesboro' and Nashville Pike. Of all the regiments belonging to Johnson or Davis' divisions the Fifty-Ninth came off the field with the most men and in the best order.

James A. Howser, Company F, Sergeant John J. Hatham and Andrew J. Watts, Company D, James H. Sheets, Company C, Patrick Reynolds, Company H, Jas. R. Dennis, Company B, Sergeant Alfred B. Barber and Corporal Reuben Cummins, Company G, and Thos. I. Hopper, Company A, were left on the field killed. Jefferson Slusser and James Slusser were left on the field wounded, and fell into the hands of the rebels. They were taken to Murfreesboro', and kept there until retaken by our forces on the evacuation of the town.

On the 1st day of January, 1863, the regiment advanced to Stone River to within two miles of Murfreesboro', and General Davis being ordered to charge across and dislodge some of the enemy who were on the opposite side, the Fifty-Ninth waded the stream on double-quick, charged up the bank and took possession of the ground, the rebels retreating before their glittering bayonets without resistance. Here they lay under fire, and returning shot for shot until after dark, when they silently withdrew, crossing back to their old position.

The battle continuing through the 2d and 3d days of January; the regiment was constantly kept under arms, frequently changing position so as to always be in front of the enemy.

During the stampede on Wednesday the rebel cavalry broke through our lines and made a dash on the train. The hospital wagon of the Fifty-Ninth Regiment was halted by one of the Texan Rangers, and the driver was ordered to drive his team off in an opposite direction. "Certainly, certainly," said the driver, but in the meantime made his calculations, and sprang from the wagon on the other side. Some fleeing soldier had thrown away his loaded musket; this fortunately was seen by Foster—the driver's name was Albert Foster—who picked it up. Passing rapidly to the rear and around his wagon he shot the rebel from his horse, mounted it and joined our cavalry, which was now charging back on the greazy scoundrels, and assisted in driving them to the woods. After chasing them until pursuit was useless he returned to his team with his spoils of victory. The horse was a valuable one, and was well equipped with a good saddle and bridle, a pair of pistols in the holsters, and saddle-bags containing some clothing and corn bread. A few more such heroic drivers would save many a government wagon from the torch of the guerrilla.

The rebels retreated from Murfreesboro' on the night of the 3d, and on the 4th General Rosecranz established his headquarters there. The army moved on through town and went into camp two or three miles below. The trains were soon ordered up with tents and all necessary camp equipage, and in a few days the troops were comfortably resting from the excessive toil and exposure of the last two weeks' campaign. Eight

days constant exposure without rest or sleep had tried the muscle and nerve of the brave men of the army to the extent, almost, of endurance. Nobly had they endured the hardships, and now they are entitled to all the comforts that is possible to be provided. They had driven the rebels from their comfortable winter quarters at Murfreesboro', and had made the prospect for a termination of the war much more flattering than when lying idly in camp at Nashville, and they were satisfied. Their hardships were soon forgotten, and in a very few days they would have been willing to have made another advance.