

A LETTER FROM THE 79TH.

We are indebted to Mr. Zecher of this city for the following brief description of the part the 79th took in the late battle at Murfreesboro. The letter is dated at Nashville, Jan. 3d. After describing the two days march through a driving rain, when near Lavergne, heavy skirmishing ensued, when the rebels skedaddled, leaving a number of killed and wounded. Skirmishing between our advance and the enemy were again resumed, and when we had arrived to within four or five miles of Murfreesboro, the firing grew fiercer and hotter on both sides, until at last it swelled into one grand chorus of a large battle. This was on the evening of the 29th, and the preparations to resume the deadly conflict in the morning were made with the greatest activity and vigilance.

On the morning of the 30th the ball was opened with great rapidity on both sides, and was continued all day with but little advantage to either side, our men still maintaining the same position they assumed when they made the attack. On the morning of the 31st, the Rebels resumed operations by opening an attack on our pickets, driving them in very rapidly. General McCook's corps, occupying the extreme right, was first attacked and compelled to retreat in the greatest disorder and confusion for two or three miles. In this fight the brave General Sill was killed, and the "fighting Indiana Dutchman," General Willich, was severely wounded. Every thing at this time looked black. Defeat stared us in the face. But just at this time, the noble General Negley with his invincible division advanced on the double quick, and interposed their force between the exultant Rebels and our routed forces. His men fought like lions and drove the Secesh back with great slaughter. If it had not been for him and his men, we would have been badly defeated and routed. I was in charge of a wagon train, and perceiving that our camping ground would be the scene of a bloody conflict, made preparations to move to the rear. But before we could get started the Rebel shell and shot were poured in among us, and a large number of horses were killed. A great part of the baggage was left on the ground. We succeeded in saving the train, and took it four or five miles to the rear, when I again went to the front.

The conflict was still raging in all its fury, with unabated vigor and intensity.— Night, however, set in and closed the conflict. To me it was an awful hour. The sight of the shattered bodies of the brave dead lying about in all shapes and contortions; the groans of the dying, as their life-blood ebbed slowly away; the heart-rending moans of the wounded, as their agonizing

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attack the line further to the right—capture the battery of the 2nd brigade, and after severe loss in killed and wounded, force us to fall back through the cedars. On gaining open ground our lines are again formed, and the 77th again advances; this time they are met by a shower of grape and canister from the rebel guns, the color-bearer is shot down—one leg almost shot off, and wounded in the other. The colors were instantly seized by another brave boy, and almost as soon he is wounded. A third time they are taken—this time by Lieut. Schroad, Co. K, from Lancaster, and he bore them until they were out of danger. The rebels made the attack in such overwhelming numbers, that they swept everything before them. The whole right wing was obliged to fall back and change their front while doing so. When the right had fallen back until they reached the Murfreesboro and Nashville turnpike, the remnants of the different brigades and divisions formed in line. Our regiment was the largest in the brigade; some of the others were so completely disorganized that they could not be brought into line at all. On came the rebels yelling and driving our forces; but they met with a warm reception—a line of fire and ball that not only checked them, but drove them back. After driving them back, our brigade and regiment were obliged to desist from want of ammunition. This ended the fighting for that day. The troops were supplied with ammunition and were again ready to be led against the enemy.

The battle was now transferred from the right wing to the left and centre. That evening our cavalry, the 4th Regulars, had a severe and protracted engagement with the rebel cavalry on our right, but night closing in prevented further demonstrations by the enemy. Early on Wednesday morning, Lt. Col. P. B. Housum, commanding the Regiment, fell, mortally wounded in the hip. He died on the Thursday evening following from the effects of the wound.

Capt. T. E. Rose, Co. B, took command, and gallantly led the regiment through the balance of the day. Early that eventful morning, I had removed eight of our wounded men from the field to a general hospital which was being established for the division. I had just got the men into the house, and had started out to look for dressings for their wounds, when rebel cavalry, who had first succeeded in turning our flank and getting into our lines, came dashing up in great numbers, driving our cavalry before them. No time was to be lost—it was impossible to remove our wounded then; to remain was to be a prisoner; to go away was very dangerous, and seeing that there was plenty of surgeons willing to remain with the wounded, and knowing that my services would be needed with the command, I dashed out, and amid the howling of the rebels in

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Johnson's division lost heavy on the first day's fight. Brig. Gen. Willich, commanding 1st brigade, was captured; Brig. Gen. Kirk, commanding 2d brigade was severely wounded; Lieut. Col. Reed, commanding 77th Illinois 2d brigade, killed; Lieut. Col. Housum commanding, 77th Pa., 2d brigade, mortally wounded; Lieut. Col. Dunn commanding 29th Indiana, 2d brigade, prisoner. Capt. Fred. S. Pyfer, Lancaster, gallantly led his Company, through the fight. He had a number of men wounded and one or two killed. The wounded which fell into the hands of the rebels were paroled.

Our wounded are being removed to Nashville as fast as possible. The different hospitals near the field were perfect slaughter houses for days, and mangled bodies, arms, and legs are familiar sights.

List of casualties in the 77th regiment, P. V., during the late battles before Murfreesboro, Tenn.:

Lieut. Col. P. B. Housum, mortally wounded in the hip, since died.

Co. A.—Killed—None. Wounded—Lieut. John E. Walker, commanding, in the knee, slightly; Private Henry Tennary, in the leg. Missing—Corporal James Cannon, and Private Frederick Rensinger.

Co. B.—Killed—None. Wounded—Privates Wm. Jones, hip, and Edwin Bratt, leg. Missing—Private Wm. Acker.

Co. C.—Killed—Sergeant Scott R. Crawford, color bearer, wounded in both legs, left amputated, made prisoner and since died. Wounded—Corporals Wm. Keith, left thigh amputated, and Samuel A. Gettys, right leg, made prisoner; Privates Wm. Gauster, ankle, made prisoner; David Stitler, breast and left wrist, made prisoner; Wm. Dixon, right eye slightly; Andrew Hurdline, face; John Higgins, left index finger shot off, and Henry Greenawalt, right arm. Missing—Privates Charles McFarland, and Richard Mitchell.

Co. D.—Killed—Private Augustus Mace. Wounded—Private Wm. Robinson, breast, slightly. Missing—2nd Lieut. Thomas G. Cochran, and Privates John C. Shirley, Jacob Blensinger, and Joshua Keenar.

Co. E.—Killed—Privates John A. Hako, and John A. Buler. Wounded—Privates Thomas Hardy, not known where, made prisoner; Edward J. Murphy, not known where, made prisoner; Johnston E. Clark, in back, slightly; Alfred Ray, breast, and Enoch Eckles, hand. Missing—Privates James Rodgers, and Jacob S. Bartholomew.

Co. F.—Killed—None. Wounded—Privates Michael Short, in the shoulder; Wm. Bivan, hand, and George Heavener, knee. Missing—Corporal George M. Cooper, and Milton M. Horton, and Privates Randall Childers, and James Lippincott.

Co. K.—Killed—Private Alexander Brown. Wounded—Corporal Robert McMullon, right thigh, made prisoner, and Privates Wm. J.