

## Chapter 5

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# *Bullets Whistled All Around Us Like Hail*

*December 26, 1862 – January 4, 1863*

Advance on Murfreesboro

Battle of Stones River

*3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, Left Wing, 14<sup>th</sup> Corps, Army of the Cumberland*

**R**osecrans' 47,000 man Army of the Cumberland moved from its Nashville encampment on December 26, headed southeast toward Murfreesboro, some four days and thirty miles of hard marching away.

The first real taste of combat for the Ohioans of the Ninety-ninth would come on the banks of Tennessee's Stones River when they and Rosecrans' army would confront the 38,000 Rebel soldiers of General Braxton Bragg.

### **Lt. Colonel Cummins' Diary, December 26, 1862:**

We were aroused at 5 o'clock this morning with orders to march at daylight. A dreary day, drizzling rain. We were ready in time, had our tents struck and then stood around in the rain waiting to march. All day troops have been filing by, cavalry, infantry, and artillery all day. It is a general forward movement. General Rosecrans and staff went by about noon. About 1 o'clock we started and moved about six miles toward Murfreesboro and camped for the night. We pitched our tent which we brought in the ammunition wagon. The men have no tents. We only have along the hospital wagon, two ambulances, one forage wagon. The Colonel, Adjutant, Chaplain, Johnny Sullivan [?] and I myself slept on the ground in one tent.

### ***The Roar of Cannons***

"We had not marched more than three miles," recalled Morrow, "when we heard heavy cannonading in the front.

"All day the booming guns seemed to tell of hot work ahead. Saturday [December 27] was much as the previous day had been, except that occasionally we saw buildings wrapped in flames, dead horses lying along the road, and every now and then an ambulance would pass to the rear with a wounded soldier or soldiers. Sabbath [December 28] we rested in camp at Stewart's Creek."<sup>1</sup>

### **Lt. Colonel Cummins' Diary, December 27, 1862:**

It rained very hard all last night. Poured down at times in torrents and the men were drenched with the rain. It is a dreary damp day. As soon as daylight dawned the roar of cannons commanded in front and here we are 10 o'clock in our camp listening to

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<sup>1</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

## ***Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment***

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the music of the war dogs [?], while many a poor fellow in front is being sent to his last home.. Marched up very slowly until we came within nine miles of Murfreesboro where we camped for the night.

### **Lt. Colonel Cummins' Diary, in camp at Stewart's Creek, December 28, 1862:**

A pleasant day. Remained in camp all day. Everything quiet. Not the crack of a rifle to be heard. I went to the right of the pike and found Schultz' battery<sup>2</sup>, their pickets and those of the Rebels were in sight. Talked to each other and exchanged papers.

"Monday [December 29] morning early we began to move," Morrow recalled, "and just as the shades of evening settled around us we encamped in the vicinity of Stones River. The enemy was in our front in force probably seventy-five thousand strong."<sup>3</sup>

"We had to drive the Rebels before us all the way," Honnell wrote his brother Ben, "and when they got here they thought they had been driven far enough so they squared around to give us fight. We got here on Monday eve and the ball opened the next morning."<sup>4</sup>

### **Lt. Colonel Cummins' Diary, December 29, 1862:**

Started early in the morning, marched back to within one and one-half miles of Lavergne then marched out the Jeffersonville Pike to the left of the Murfreesboro Pike where our regiment went on picket. Men called in and marched over the Murfreesboro Pike then forward to within three miles of Murfreesboro where we camped for the night. Our advance was skirmishing all day and we could continually hear the sound of musketry and cannon. Around where we camped the whole country appeared to be alive with our troops and the whole country was illuminated with our camp fires.

"Tuesday [December 30] morning the battle opened by the enemy throwing shot and shell into our lines," reported Morrow, "but most of the day was spent in feeling each others position."

### **Lt. Colonel Cummins' Diary, December 30, 1862:**

A cold, damp day, drizzling rain by times, then clearing off for a few minutes the sun shone brightly. This morning early the battle opened fiercely and raged without intermission. The fighting was principally on the right which the enemy tried to turn. Our lines was in the morning perpendicularly across the Murfreesboro Pike, but our right was driven back during the day so as to be nearly parallel to the pike. At one time a large part of our train was captured, but it was afterwards recaptured from the enemy. Our loss was very severe, how much cannot be ascertained. The slaughter of

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<sup>2</sup> This would be Frederick Schultz's Battery M, First Ohio Light Artillery, which was attached to the Second Brigade of Timothy R. Stanley in the Second Division of General George H. Thomas' center of The Army of the Cumberland.

<sup>3</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863. More authoritative estimates placed the number of Confederates at closer to thirty eight thousand.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas C. Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, January 5, 1863, Ohio Historical Society Archives.

## **A Shouting of Orders**

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officers is terrible. General Sill is killed. General Van Cleve wounded. The Fifteenth Regulars badly cut to pieces and many valuable officers lost. Several batteries are also lost by us, whether we have captured any from the enemy I am unable to learn.

We have been in hearing all day [?] where we could see the fight but were not engaged. We witnessed the wounded being carried from the field. I have sat on my horse all day witnessing the fight. Our regiment in line the whole time. Occasionally a stray shot came rather close to us, but injured no one. We camped at night on the same ground we did yesterday.

"But on Wednesday [December 31] morning," Morrow continued, "the enemy attempted to mass his troops and turn our right wing. And for some time the conflict was terrible; our lines being driven back for nearly two miles. Several of our hospitals were captured, and many of our brave officers and men fell during the day. But the Rebel loss was also severe."<sup>5</sup>

The Fourteenth Army Corps' Third Brigade occupied the extreme left of the line on the foggy, cold morning of the last day of 1862.

"On the morning of December 31 [Wednesday]," reported Col. Samuel W. Price of the Twenty-first Kentucky Infantry and commander of the brigade, "my brigade was ordered double quick from the position it held on the north of the Nashville and Murfreesborough Railroad, across and on the east side of Stones River, crossing the river at a ford <sup>6</sup> about one mile below where the railroad bridge crosses it. At the top of the hill, and about half a mile distant from the river, on the east side, I formed my brigade on the left of the First Brigade, then commanded by Col. Samuel Beatty. No sooner had I thus formed the brigade than an order came from Brigadier-General Van Cleve, then commanding the Third Division, for my brigade to cross the river at the same ford, and for me to rearrange it so as to overlook and command the ford. I accordingly recrossed, and stationed the brigade on the crest of the hill, the Eighth Kentucky Regiment on the right of the front line, Third Wisconsin Battery (commanded by Lieutenant [Cortland] Livingston)<sup>7</sup> on the left of the Eighth Kentucky, Fifty-first Ohio on the left of the artillery, and Thirty-fifth Indiana Regiment on the left of the Fifty-first Ohio. The second or rear line was formed by the Twenty-first Kentucky and Ninety-Ninth Ohio Regiments, Twenty-first Kentucky on the right, and the Ninety-Ninth Ohio on the left.

"During the entire day severe fighting was going on with the right wing and center. The battle-field was perfectly visible from the position I held, and although frequently in range of the enemy's cannon, and exposed at times to their bursting shells and solid shot, the men and officers of my command were perfectly cool and composed, and remained in ranks and conducted themselves as became soldiers and officers.

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<sup>5</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

<sup>6</sup> Captain T.J. Wright of the Eighth Kentucky said the river at this point was waist deep and "cold enough to make one catch his breath as it reached the hips." T.J. Wright, *History of the Eighth Regiment Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, (St. Joseph, Missouri, St. Joseph Steam Printing Company, 1880), p. 125.

<sup>7</sup> According to Hiram Henry Gillespie Bradt's *History of the Services of the Third Battery of Wisconsin Light Artillery*, the battery "took our positions at the ford and repelled with a few shots an advance of Rebel cavalry upon a hospital and some baggage wagons around it. Here was a graveyard containing Revolutionary soldiers' graves."

## Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment

"About 2 p.m. three-hundred or four-hundred Rebel cavalry appeared on the east and opposite side of the river, and made a dash at a number of Government wagons containing camp equipage. Before they reached the wagons, Lieutenant Livingston [Third Wisconsin Battery], ever vigilant and prompt in the performance of his duties, opened a sharp fire of artillery on them, killing three of them and somewhat confusing the remainder. Notwithstanding, they succeeded in starting off a number of wagons; but during their hasty retreat the artillery disabled one of the wagons, thereby blockading the road and saving the wagons in rear."<sup>8</sup>

"About 12 m. I saw a great stampede among the ambulances, wagons, and stragglers opposite," Lieutenant Livingston reported. "and was told some Rebel cavalry were charging on them. I was fearful of making a mistake and firing on our own cavalry. We could not see the enemy until he got among the wagons and was taking them off. We then opened upon them and disabled two wagons, which blocked the lane and obliged them to leave without their booty. I think they got off with five wagons. They left one man killed, and carried off their wounded. We shelled the woods in the direction they had taken. We expended 50 rounds of ammunition that day. The only casualty was one man, Henry S. Netley, wounded in the thigh, slightly."<sup>9</sup>

"Expecting that an attempt would be made afterward by the enemy to cross the river," Price noted, "I detached the Eighth Kentucky as sharpshooters, to command (under cover of the bank) the ford, and prevent their success in such an attempt. Afterward nothing unusual occurred on that day, and my brigade remained in status quo."

### **Lt. Colonel Cummins' Diary, December 31, 1862:**

A cold, raw day. We were up and all ready for the fight at 4 o'clock. An order was received in the morning from General Rosecrans complimenting the troops for their good conduct yesterday, and encouraging them to fight well in future. He cautioned them to fire low and trust to the bayonet. Our chaplain offered up a prayer before the regiment this morning for our success. We were marched to the extreme left, marched across a creek at a ford, then brought back on the other side and lay there all day guarding the ford. The fight still went on in the night and the cannonading and musketry was furious. We are said to have captured a brigade of Rebels today, how true it is I cannot tell. The reports of the battle are numerous, but cannot be believed. General Millich [?] is killed. Lieutenant Colonel Garusche's head was shot off by a solid shot. General Gibson is wounded. The slaughter of officers and men terrible indeed. We were again placed where we could see the wounded being carried by the hospital. Many were horribly mangled. A cannon ball went very near my head. Camped on the field.

On the night of the 31<sup>st</sup>, Major General Thomas L. Crittenden, commanding the Union left wing, reunited his command on the left of the turnpike, taking up a new line of battle before daylight, about five-hundred yards to the rear of the former line.

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<sup>8</sup> United States War Department. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880 - 1901) Series 1, Vol. XX/1, S#29, p. 607.

<sup>9</sup> *O.R.* Series 1, Vol. XX/1, S# 29, Report No. 147, Report of Lieutenant Cortland Livingston, pp. 582-583

## *A Shouting of Orders*

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An occasional exchange of gunfire on essentially quiet, clear and cold Thursday, January 1, was enough to remind the Ninety-ninth that it still was part of a deadly conflict.

During Thursday, the Third Division of the left wing was again across Stones River, taking ground extending about half a mile up from the ford, with the right on the high ground at the river and the left forward and perpendicular to the right. Originally Van Cleve's Fifth, the force was now under the command of Colonel Samuel Beatty of the Nineteenth Ohio due to Van Cleve's injury the previous day from a shell. Morrow claimed "a cooler and braver man does not exist than Col. Beat[t]y."<sup>10</sup>

Lying perpendicular to the river, Price's brigade massed in a double battle line. From the shelter of woods, the Union troops looked southeast over a large field, about a quarter mile wide, of broken down corn stalks and a few small buildings on their right. From right to left the front line consisted of the Fifty-first Ohio, whose right flank was anchored on Stones River, the Eighth Kentucky, and the Thirty-fifth Indiana regiments. The second line had the Twenty-first Kentucky on the right and the Ninety-Ninth Ohio on the left.<sup>11</sup>

Bragg had ordered Major General John C. Breckinridge to watch closely for any Union crossing of Stones River. Despite Breckinridge's compliance, his own scouts failed to detect the forces in blue.<sup>12</sup>

"...the battery was advanced across the river with the Third Division, under command of Colonel Beatty," recalled Lieutenant Livingston, "with orders to protect the left from any flank movement, but not to bring on a general engagement. After moving forward about half a mile we discovered two regiments of infantry on a hill-side. We threw a few shells among them, and they withdrew to the woods to their left. We fired very little that day, only when we saw evidence of their massing troops. We had one man (A.J. Uleric) slightly wounded by the sharpshooters."

"Our artillery opened on them at different times and dispersed them;" Price said, "but after the firing ceased they reappeared. At sundown our artillery was ordered back to the rear, to the west side of the river."

Thursday night passed quietly until near midnight when sharp firing on the skirmish line killed a private of the Thirty-fifth Indiana.

The Union division held the position until Friday, January 2.

### *Awaiting the Rebels*

Early Friday morning, January 2, a day that began in a drizzle, the Rebels posted sharpshooters, and skirmishing began. The picketing continued throughout the day, interrupted occasionally by an artillery shell. The Third Brigade, including the Ninety-ninth, was in front, and the Third Wisconsin Battery was ordered forward. The Ninety-ninth mustered only three-hundred sixty-nine men, two field officers, seven line officers, and three staff officers.

For hours the Ninety-ninth lay flat on the ground while round shot whistled over them, and musket balls and shells fell among them. "Their position was peculiarly trying, yet not a man flinched," Morrow stated.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

<sup>11</sup> James Lee McDonough, *Stones River -- Bloody Winter in Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1980), pp. 169-170.

<sup>12</sup> William C. Davis, *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), p. 339.

<sup>13</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

## ***Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment***

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“Through the day our skirmishers reported at different times the appearance of Rebel artillery in our front,” Colonel Price said, “and also of fifteen Rebel infantry regiments that seemed to pass toward our left, which was promptly reported to the commander of the Third Division, Colonel Beatty. The Rebel artillery frequently shelled the woods we occupied, and killed a private of the Eighth Kentucky, at the same time tearing the colors of that regiment in pieces. In the skirmishing of the day a private of the Fifty-first Ohio was killed, and one or two of the Eighth Kentucky and Thirty-fifth Indiana regiments wounded.”

**Lt. Colonel Cummins to Mrs. Cummins, from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, January 9, 1863:**

On the morning of the 2nd we crossed Stones River towards Murfreesboro, had our division in three lines, our regiment in the second line, where we lay down on the ground under a heavy fire until about 3 o'clock p.m. During which time one-half dozen of our men were killed and wounded, probably more. We lay near the top of a slight hill<sup>14</sup>. The enemy were in a woods about one-hundred fifty yards opposite across an open field.

Lieutenant Lot D. Young of the Confederate's Fourth Kentucky Infantry, a regiment of Breckinridge's brigade, along with another lieutenant and Captain W.P. Bramblett, crawled through the undergrowth of the battlefield to reconnoiter the Union's Third Brigade's position from a distance of but several hundred yards.

“...we could see the enemy's concentrated forces near and above the lower ford on the opposite side of the river,” Young recorded, “his artillery being thrown forward and nearest to the river. His artillery appeared to be close together and covering quite a space of ground; we could not tell how many guns, but there was quite a number. The infantry was seemingly in large force and extended farther down toward the ford. Captain Bramblett was a man of no mean order of military genius and information, and after looking at, and studying the situation in silence for some minutes, he said to us boys, ‘that he believed Rosecrans was setting a trap for Bragg.’ Continuing, he said, ‘If he means to attack us on this side, why does he not reinforce on this side? Why concentrate so much artillery on the bluff yonder? He must be expecting us to attack that force yonder, pointing to Beatty's position on the hill north of us, and if we do, he will use that artillery on us as we move to the attack.’”<sup>15</sup>

Bramblett and the lieutenants reported their discovery to Breckinridge. Accompanied by his son Cabell, Theodore O'Hara, and his assistant inspector general Major James Wilson, Breckinridge rode out to the river. While advancing, they encountered Major General Leonidas Polk, Lieutenant General William J. Hardee, and Colonel William D. Pickett. They rode along the river toward the right until Polk and Hardee were called back to their units. Meanwhile, the Breckinridges and Pickett continued forward to Confederate Brigadier General Roger W. Hanson's skirmish line. The senior Breckinridge ordered the Federal skirmishers in front of Hanson's troops driven back so that he could better determine what he was up against. He discovered the Ninety-ninth and the rest of the Union advance occupying the crest of a ridge near Wayne's Hill. Van Cleve's forces, partly sheltered by trees, were

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<sup>14</sup> A ridge near Wayne's Hill.

<sup>15</sup> Lot D. Young, *Reminiscences of a Soldier of the Orphan Brigade*, (Paris, Kentucky, after 1912), p. 47

## ***A Shouting of Orders***

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aligned at right angles to Hanson, just under a mile away. Five hundred yards of open ground lay between the river and the Federal troops.<sup>16</sup>

After consulting with his adjutant and scouts, Bragg decided to attack the ridge in front of Wayne's Hill with an aim toward occupying it with his artillery for shelling the flanks of Union forces under Crittenden.

During a mid-day meeting with Bragg, Breckinridge strongly objected to the planned attack, arguing that the Union forces were heavily positioned on higher ground with well placed artillery.

Bragg, who shared a mutual dislike for one another with Breckinridge, refused to change his mind, closing the discussion with an order for Polk to begin an artillery shelling of the Union troops at 3:45 that afternoon, followed by a 4 o'clock main attack to be signaled by a single shot from the center of Bragg's line.

That afternoon, using the cover of woods near Wayne's Hill, the Rebels massed in heavy columns of two lines separated by 150 to 200 yards. On the right [Brigadier General Gideon Johnson] Pillow was in front and [Brigadier General William] Preston followed, while on the left [Theodore] O'Hara led and [Brigadier General R.W.] Hanson was second, in all about 5,000 to 5,300 infantry and artillery forces from Breckinridge's division, which were supported by two batteries and cavalry.

"About 2:30 we are called to attention and receive orders to charge the enemy," recalled John Williams Green of Brigadier General R.W. Hanson's brigade of Rebels. "There is some little delay in arranging the attack and bringing up the other forces to join us in the attack (the brigades of Generals Preston, Pillow and Adams)."<sup>17</sup>

Hiram Henry Gillespie Bradt's *History of the Services of the Third Battery of Wisconsin Light Artillery*, provides a detailed account of the battle at this point.

The line of battle which soon developed, was in the form of a crescent for a time, wings on the river; our forces hugged the ground for a time to escape the shot and shell that all the morning was poured into us from three sides. L.J. Uline was here wounded in our front position and several horses were hit. At two o'clock General Rosecrans and Father Coney [Cooney]<sup>18</sup> rode in front of the line and discovered the Rebels crawling up and forming in the woods near our front. He ordered our battery to move forward. We had just got into position when a roll of musketry told us our time had come. The general informed us they would be on us in fifteen minutes; in less time they came down in three lines charging and firing, 20,000 strong, under Breckinridge and Cheatam. They emerged from the timber on a run, followed by their artillery, who, getting into position, soon were making things lively for us, and

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<sup>16</sup> William C. Davis. *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), pp. 339-340

<sup>17</sup> A.D. Kirwan, editor. *Johnny Green of the Orphan Brigade: The Journal of a Confederate Soldier*, (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1956), p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> Cooney was chaplain to the Thirty-fifth Indiana. Earlier in the day he had offered these words to the men of his regiment: "Boys...this is a New Year; many of you will never see the sun go down today; I desire to say to you a few words. You are an Irish regiment. Your countrymen have already proved their devotion to the flag of the nation by their courage and stamina on the field of battle. The eyes of the division are upon you. Your friends at home expect much from you -- you must not disappoint them. Now, then, many of you have not been to your [religious] duties. All of you make a good act of contrition, sincerely ask God to forgive you, and I will pronounce absolution..." Source: Stevenson, *Indiana's Roll of Honor*, Vol. I, p. 577.

## *Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment*

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to stop them with our small command was like stopping the flow of the Mississippi river with bull rushes.<sup>19</sup>

"We were stationed in a cornfield," Honnell recalled, "but the corn had been cut up and taken off the field. About 3 o'clock the Rebels drove in our pickets and we were ordered to lay flat on the ground and not get up or fire until we had orders."<sup>20</sup>

### *The Confederates Charge*

"About 3 o'clock p.m. they formed their men in two solid, almost about twenty deep," Colonel Cummins recalled, "one on our right and one on our left and marched across firing constantly. They had five brigades against five regiments of us. Our artillery was sent back. They had two batteries with them."<sup>21</sup>

"At 3 o'clock p.m. the heavy booming of the cannon ceased," recalled the Eighth Kentucky's Captain T.J. Wright. "Then we discovered the immense columns of the enemy moving toward us. They made a grand scene, moving over the wide, undulating field, with their numerous bright flags unfurled and fluttering in the wind, their several generals mounted on magnificent chargers, surrounded by their staff officers."<sup>22</sup>

Their advance signaled by a lone gun, the main Confederate column moved under clear skies diagonally across the front of the woods, headed for the tree-covered heights above the river and the Third Wisconsin battery under the command of Lieutenant Livingston. It would be the conclusive event of the battle.

"At 3:15 o'clock," Price wrote, "the Rebels advanced in force through the corn-field in our front, supposed to be a division."

"A little before 4 p.m. the entire army corps of the Rebel General Hardee bore down upon our Division," Morrow recalled. "The Rebel advance was led by John C. Breckinridge."<sup>23</sup>

"...about 4 p.m., a sudden and concentrated attack was made on the Third Division, now commanded by Colonel Beatty," Crittenden detailed. "Several batteries opened at the same time on this division."<sup>24</sup>

Johnny Green tells the story from the Rebel side of the line.

About 4 o'clock the advance is ordered. We are ordered to fix bayonets, to move forward at double quick, to reserve our fire until within 100 yards, then to take good aim and fire and then immediately to rush upon them with fixed bayonets.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Hiram Henry Gillespie Bradt. *History of the Services of the Third Battery of Wisconsin Light Artillery*, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas C. Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, January 5, 1863, Ohio Historical Society Archives.

<sup>21</sup> Lieutenant Colonel John E. Cummins to Harriet Cummins, January 9, 1863.

<sup>22</sup> T.J. Wright, *History of the Eighth Regiment Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, (St. Joseph, Missouri, St. Joseph Steam Printing Co., 1880), p. 128. In his book on Breckinridge, author William C. Davis says the Confederate advance was "one of the greatest Confederacy infantry assaults of the war in the West."

<sup>23</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

<sup>24</sup> *O.R.*, Series 1, Vol. XX/1, S# 29, Report No. 94, Report of Maj. Gen. Thomas L. Crittenden, pp. 446-453

<sup>25</sup> Kirwan, *Johnny Green.*, p.67-68

## *A Shouting of Orders*

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"A more imposing and thoroughly disciplined line of soldiers never moved to the attack of an enemy than responded to the signal gun stationed immediately in our rear, which was fired exactly at 4 o'clock." recalled Lieutenant Young of the Rebel Fourth Kentucky. "Every man vying with his fellowman, in steadiness of step and correct alignment, with the officers giving low and cautionary commands, many knowing that it was their last hour on earth, but without hesitating moved forward to their inevitable doom and defeat."<sup>26</sup>

"Indeed, the company that was approaching, as Lieutenant Col. Cummins pleasantly remarked, might not prove [?]. But it must be admitted, they came not as a mob, but in good order. They advanced so coolly and gracefully as if [?] parade. They [?] in splendid military style. Thorough discipline was indicated in every movement."<sup>27</sup>

"On they came, regiments in close column by division," Wright recalled. "Our little isolated brigade, that 'Old Rosy' had placed out as a bait to lure on the enemy into his well arranged trap, ordered in their skirmishers, but not until the brave and gallant Captain Banton and several of his men had fallen. For a few minutes our line was as still as the grave, but it was only the calm that precedes the storm. A small elevation immediately in front concealed the mighty host of well disciplined grey coats from view for a few minutes."

"As they advanced to our skirmish line," Price wrote, "Captain Banton, of the Eighth Kentucky, who was in command of the skirmishers of the Eighth Kentucky Regiment, was shot and instantly killed. When they had advanced to within gun-shot of our line, the Fifty-first Ohio Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel R.W. McClain; the Eighth Kentucky Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Col. E. May, and the Thirty-fifth Indiana Regiment, commanded by Col. B.F. Mullen, poured into their ranks a deadly and effective fire, which seemed, for a while, to stop their advancing column, but again they advanced slowly, and here the battle raged desperately. The gallantry and coolness there evinced by the officers and soldiers of the Fifty-first Ohio, Eighth Kentucky, and Thirty-fifth Indiana Regiments deserve the highest praise, and heartily do I attribute it to them."

"So down we laid on the muddy ground." Honnell wrote, "and on came Mr. Rebels yelling like blue devils. There was one Regiment laying just in front of ours and as the Rebels came up they rose and at it they went - Jesus Lord of Moses - but the bullets whistled all around us like hail."<sup>28</sup>

"They advanced until they came close when they yelled and charged bayonet, firing all the time," Cummins said. "Their front ranks were armed with Colt revolving rifles."

"The Rebels made a desperate charge on our brigade," was Private Early's description. "We was second in line of battle. We was lying flat down on the muddy ground and when the fire opened the bullets sung around us like bees and the bombshells bursting sounded like reports of heavy thunder all around us."<sup>29</sup>

Wright continues his narrative.

"The gallant old Fifty-first Ohio on our right on higher ground opened their crashing sheet of fire first, then as the heads of the advancing enemy re-appeared within eighty rods of the Eighth, our sturdy mountain boys received the anxiously desired order, 'fire by file, fire.' A blaze of fire and smoke ran along down our ranks, every man taking deliberate aim. The effect of this murderous fire became visible to

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<sup>26</sup> Young, *Reminiscences*, p. 49

<sup>27</sup> "?," *Lima Gazette*, February 4, 1863.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas C. Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, January 5, 1863, Ohio Historical Society Archives.

<sup>29</sup> Early, *Letters Home*, January 9, 1863, p. 12

## *Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment*

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all our men, which infused them with fresh courage. True, our brave lads were falling fast, but the enemy was checked and not a mounted Rebel in sight of our line. Company commanders walked along behind their men with encouraging words and to 'shoot low.' The brave old 'thirty-fives' on our left were also doing nobly. The ground on top of the ridge in our front was in fifteen minutes covered with dead, dying and wounded Rebels, and many of our men were falling by the terrible fire of the enemy, who began to work around to the right of the Fifty-first Ohio with an overwhelming force. At the same time another large force of the enemy were completely flanking the Thirty-fifth Indiana. The enemy were not more than forty steps in our front when we received the order to fall back, which we were compelled to do, leaving many of our brave comrades cut down by the leaden messengers of death."

After progressing two-thirds of the distance of the open field, Hanson's Rebel forces had stopped, their leader mortally wounded by shrapnel that had severed an artery above a knee. Breckinridge himself attempted to stem the flow, but failed.

"For the first forty-four minutes of the action," wrote Morrow, "there was a continued roar of infantry and artillery that seemed to shake the earth, and whole lines of the enemy went down before the hot blast of our guns."<sup>30</sup>

"The overwhelming numbers of the enemy directed upon two brigades forced them, after a bloody but short conflict, back to the river," Crittenden noted. "The object of the enemy (it is ascertained) was to take the battery which we had on that side of the river. In this attempt it is most likely they would have succeeded, but for the sound judgment and wise precaution of Colonel Beatty in changing the position of his battery."

"I then sent my caissons across to the west side," explained the Third Wisconsin Battery's Lieutenant Cortland Livingston, "and, seeing everything giving way, I sent one section at a time across, still working those that remained until the others were over. When the last section reached the ford, one regiment of the enemy was within 100 yards of it, and poured a galling fire into us. Many of our horses were shot dead in the river, but our brave boys cleared them from the teams, and everything got across."

"After these three regiments had contended with the enemy," Price explained, "far superior in numbers to my command, for ten or twelve minutes, and under a severe fire of three batteries of the enemy (none on our side to respond to them), and seeing that to oppose them further would only end in the slaughter of my men, I ordered the front line to fall back in order, which it did, as far as possible, and for the second or rear line, composed of the Twenty-first Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel J.C. Evans, and Ninety-ninth Ohio Regiment, commanded by Colonel P.T. Swaine, to fire on the enemy as they advanced. Their line being broken and confused by the front line retiring, also was compelled, after a few volleys, to fall back. The officers and men of these two regiments also deserve especial praise for their gallantry."

"The Thirty-fifth Indiana which was in front of us broke and ran over our regiment as it lay on the ground," Cummins explained. "The two companies of our regiment - on the right - fired as the enemy came up, the others could not fire without firing into the Thirty-fifth Indiana. The troop had given way on our right and left. Colonel Swaine ordered a retreat. Company A, the right company of our regiment, remained and fired twice after the rest of the regiment fell back. I stayed with them. Captain Scott (commanding Company A) was shot

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<sup>30</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

## ***A Shouting of Orders***

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and died twenty-four hours after. We fell back and crossed Stones River two-hundred yards distant."

"The first line stood them a good while but they come up six column deep, then we had orders to retreat back to our reinforcements," Private Early confirmed. "We had retreat across a fifteen acre field right in plain view of the enemy, but when we got across the field we met our reinforcement."

**Lt. Colonel Cummins to Mrs. Cummins, from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, January 9, 1863:**

I say to you what I would not say to another (for fear they might say I was egotistical), I did not leave the field until a solid column of the enemy came within fifty yards of me, firing a perfect stream of bullets and charging bayonets. How I escaped so well appears miraculous, but at the time I must say I was not frightened and only thought of rallying our men to fight the enemy. I was not shot until I reached the banks of Stones River where I was standing, hoping enough of our men would rally on the site [?] and the enemy to [?] their [?]. Colonel Swaine and Adj. Lefever were together and went back across Stones River together before the regiment was ordered to fall back. The officers and men I think all did well and showed true courage. We were overpowered by numbers for a short time, but had not [?] thrown here [?] over the scene, we would have occupied Murfreesboro that night.

As regiments retreated, Colonel Bernard F. Mullen of the Thirty-fifth Indiana called for the Ninety-Ninth Ohio to reinforce. But Colonel Swaine had already ordered a withdrawal, so Mullen gave the order to join the Ohioans.

The right flank of the Seventy-ninth fell open as the Thirty-fifth Indiana retreated, so it too fell back, fiercely pursued by Pillow's brigade of Tennesseans. Now, all of Colonel Price's brigade holding the Union right had been routed. After only a few hasty volleys the Federal regiments rushed in retreat to cross Stones River.<sup>31</sup>

"The [Confederate] column next encountered the Ninety-ninth Ohio, Twenty-first Kentucky, and Nineteenth Ohio," Fyfee reported, "which were successively borne backward, as were the Ninth and Eleventh Kentucky."<sup>32</sup>

"The regiment in front of us held their ground as long as they could, but at last they gave way and we rose and fired," Honnell wrote. "But as they were five to our one, our officers ordered us to retreat and away we went like the Devil and Tom Walker."<sup>33</sup>

"Such was the vast numbers of the attacking force, that the Third Division was compelled to fall back. It would have been little less than murder not to have done so. But we did not retreat until the enemy was within thirty or forty yards of us. Falling back across the river, which is narrow and shallow, the foe advanced until he came within easy range of our cannon, when the most terrible slaughter commenced..."<sup>34</sup>

"Away we went across the cornfield for about one-quarter mile, best man first," Honnell said. "You may swear I done some tall running. The darned Butternuts were within

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<sup>31</sup> James Lee McDonough, *Stones River -- Bloody Winter in Tennessee* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1980) pp. 187-189.

<sup>32</sup> *O.R.*, Vol. XX/1, Series 1, S#29, Report No. 154, Report of Colonel James P. Pyffe, Fifty-ninth Ohio, p. 599.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas C. Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, January 5, 1863, Ohio Historical Society Archives.

<sup>34</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

## *Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment*

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about one-hundred yards of us after when we started and they chopped away at us as fast as they could. I can't hardly see how a single man got across that cornfield alive for the bullets and shells flew around us on all sides."<sup>35</sup>

"Just as we commenced falling back," relates Morrow, "Capt. Scott,<sup>36</sup> Co. A, had his thigh broken by a rifle ball. We had to leave him where he fell. And in order to preserve his sword from the Rebels, he laid his body on it, thus concealing it from their view, until they were driven back by Uncle Sam's bayonets." <sup>37</sup>

About the same time Capt. Oliver P. Capell of Company G was wounded in the leg.

"I think Capt. C did not hear the order fall back," Morrow recalled, "as he stood still, swinging his sword and calling to his men to halt. On that fatal spot he fell. The Rebels stole his watch and sword."<sup>38</sup>

Following amputation, Capell died at the hospital.

"On we moved," Young of gray Fourth Kentucky wrote, "Beatty's and Growes' lines giving way seemingly to allow the jaws of the trap to press with more and ever increasing vigor upon its unfortunate and discomfited victims. But, on we moved, until the survivors of the decoy had passed the river and over the lines stationed on the other side of the river, when their new line of infantry opened on our confused and disordered columns another destructive and ruinous fire."<sup>39</sup>

"We ran across the cornfield to a strip of woods where we were reinforced and we rallied and turned on them and drove them back over the same ground at the point of the bayonet."<sup>40</sup>

Morrow was amused by an battlefield incident involving Lefever. He related it to his Lima readers.

You ask, what fun in battle? I answer yes. I have heard men converse as freely and gayly on the battlefield as they would in their parlors at home. The incident refers to companion Ben F. Lefever, who, since he came to the army has been wont to wear very large boots. Often during our long marches the Adjutant and myself have held controversies as to the proper size of a soldier's boots. I held the orthodox doctrine that boots ought to come somewhere in the vicinity of fitting the feet. He argued that two or three sizes larger than a man wore at home was just the thing for the army. It was so easy to get them on in the morning when so frozen as to look like two joints of stove pipe. After tugging and pulling for a long time, on sundry occasions, to get on my own neatly fitting feet protectors, I am slightly inclined to adopt Ben's theory, 'and govern myself accordingly.' But I waited to see how the thing would work. And what think you of the result? It terminated as many a thing has done before - in disaster. For as the fight was about to commence, our officers, as was proper, sent their horses to the rear. And when ordered to fall back, Ben's horse was gone, but himself and boots were there, in the thickest of the affray. Now bear in mind, falling back in the middle of a perfect storm of lead and iron, you will not always pick your steps deliberately and gracefully as would a lady at home while crossing the mud-

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas C. Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, January 5, 1863, Ohio Historical Society Archives.

<sup>36</sup> G.A.R. Post No. 100 at Van Wert was established in 1866 in honor of Scott.

<sup>37</sup> "?," *Lima Gazette*, February 4, 1863.

<sup>38</sup> "?," *Lima Gazette*, February 4, 1863.

<sup>39</sup> Young, *Reminiscences*, p. 50

<sup>40</sup> Thomas C. Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, January 5, 1863, Ohio Historical Society Archives.

## ***A Shouting of Orders***

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bespattered street, but you may be compelled by force of circumstances, to do as our young and ardent lovers often set, when they "go it blind." Adj. Ben was retreating as a soldier should, coolly and [?], but a little in the fast order, as the Yankee [?] said, not exactly running, but rather tall walking. The Adj. went forward, but his big boots - coward [??] lation between Ben and his boots was just the reverse of that which existed between the Irishman's heart and his legs. Pat said he had as brave a heart as ever throbbed in man's bosom, but his legs were so cowardly that they always ran away with his brave heart in the hour of danger. - Ben's boots refused to run, finally stuck fast, and he walked right out of them. But do not suppose for one moment that any blame attached to legs, but hurl your thunderbolts at the boots, and the man who made them. And now that the fight is over, I see no philosophical or logical connection between big boots and comfort in the battlefield. There is some one else about headquarters quite ready to agree with me. Know all men by these presents, as men say when writing their wills, that our Adjutant is a hero, boots or no boots, as the accidents of war may determine. For be it spoken to his praise that as soon as we obtained reinforcements, he returned bravely to the fight, where he continued battling manfully until the Rebels were driven from the field. He was not precisely in the condition of our Revolutionary heroes, but first cousin to their condition; they were barefooted, he in his stocking feet.<sup>41</sup>

"A more gallant charge was never made," recorded Rebel Johnny Green, "we drove them before us, captured four-hundred prisoners and followed the fleeing enemy closely, but they waded across the river and their batteries and reinforcements on the other side of the river about one-hundred yards away poured a deadly fire upon us; we could not reach them and it was certain death to remain where we were, so a retreat was ordered."<sup>42</sup>

### ***The Union Rallies***

"As soon as it became evident that the enemy were driving Colonel Beatty," Major General Crittenden wrote, "I turned to my chief of artillery, Captain John Mendenhall, and said 'Now, Mendenhall, you must cover my men with your cannon.' Without any show of excitement or haste, almost as soon as the order was given, the batteries began to open, so perfectly had he placed them. In twenty minutes from the time the order was received, fifty-two guns were firing upon the enemy. They cannot be said to have been checked in their advance from a rapid advance they broke at once into a rapid retreat. Re-enforcements soon began to arrive, and our troops crossed the river, and pursued the fleeing until dark."

"After crossing to the west side of the river," Price said, "by the perseverance of the officers a great number of the men were rallied and again returned to the scene of action, and aided in the ultimate defeat of the enemy. All the line officers behaved with the greatest coolness and courage during the entire engagement."

"Then our cannons let loose on them, then there was the awfulest time that ever I witnessed in my life," was Private Early's recollection. "It just sounded like constant thunder."

"Another division came to our assistance," said Cummins. "The men generally rallied and recrossed the river and went into the fight. And we soon drove them from the field with tremendous slaughter."

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<sup>41</sup> "?," *Lima Gazette*, February 4, 1863.

<sup>42</sup> Kirwan, *Johnny Green*, p. 68

## *Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment*

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"We had gotten only fairly started," Young recalled, "when the great jaws of the trap on the bluff from the opposite side of the river were sprung, and bursting shells that completely drowned the voice of man were plunging and tearing through our columns, ploughing up the earth at our feet in front and behind, everywhere. But with steadiness we moved on."

"We opened fire on them as soon as we had crossed, though many of our caissons had not yet come up," Livingston wrote. "We opened fire at three different positions after we crossed, and soon after the enemy gave back."

"We met on the river bank General Negley's troops coming gallantly to our rescue," recalled Hiram Bradt of the Third Wisconsin Battery. "General Rosecrans massed sixty-four cannons on the bank to meet the oncoming flood and there occurred the total defeat of the enemy. Men never could have done more than was done there, every man seemed to put forth almost superhuman efforts to check the Rebel host, which they did and most disastrously it proved to the Rebels, as General Breckenridge in his report to General Bragg stated he lost in forty minutes one-thousand men."

Bradt would calculate his battery, in its first real combat, fired three-hundred fifty-eight rounds at the Rebels during the battle of Stones River.<sup>43</sup>

"As we reached the north bank of the stream," recalled Wright, "followed by the wildly cheering Rebels, whose bullets came pattering the water like a first class hail storm, the mass of Rebels emerged from the timber into open land. The opportune time had come for 'Rosy' to spring his well laid trap. On the rocky bluffs above us a long mass of cedars, which to a casual observer appeared a natural growth, suddenly became prostrate. Simultaneously the terrific discharge of sixty pieces of artillery<sup>44</sup>, well charged with grape and canister, went crashing over our heads, plowing gaps of death and destruction in the heavy columns of the enemy. This threw them into disorder. General Jeff. C. Davis' division, and the greater part of Negley's division, rushed forward to the bank of the stream. Meanwhile, the scattered members of our brigade fell into line wherever opportunity afforded the best chance to return the enemy's fire. A desperate close range fight ensued. Our artillery continued to pour a deadly fire over our heads, and before the water ceased to squirt from our boot-legs the greater part of our command that remained alive and not dangerously wounded, re-entered the river, this time the pursuers. The enemy made a desperate and confused resistance, and at first were forced to gradually fall back, but soon were fleeing in a perfect rout. They continued this until they had reached the timber near Little's Creek. A dozen men, of Companies D and H, of the Eighth, were the first to straddle one piece of the noted Washington Battery, taken here from the enemy."<sup>45</sup>

"While standing near the river," Morrow wrote, "as reinforcements were rushing to our support, with the sword in his left hand and the revolver in his right, some Rebel had the impudence to shoot at him [Lieutenant Col. Cummins] in such a careless manner as to strike

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<sup>43</sup> Hiram Henry Gillespie Bradt. *History of the Services of the Third Battery of Wisconsin Light Artillery*, pp. 17-18. In his report for the Official Records, Livingston said the battery fired 300 rounds on January 2. The Third had nine horses killed, but only four men wounded.

<sup>44</sup> T. Kevin Griffin reports only forty-five pieces were massed by Crittenden's chief of artillery, Captain John Mendenhall, p. 83. Other sources put the number at fifty-eight, but Edwin C. Bearrs, a noted Civil War historian, says it was fifty-seven, with fifty-three firing at any one time. Edwin C. Bearrs, "Stones' River: The Artillery at 4:45 P.M., January 2, 1863," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, February 1964, pp. 38-39.

<sup>45</sup> T.J. Wright, *History of the Eighth Regiment Kentucky Volunteer Infantry*, (St. Joseph, Missouri, St. Joseph Steam Printing Co., 1880), p. 129-130.

## ***A Shouting of Orders***

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the weapon in his [right] hand, actually breaking it, besides wounding the hand that held it. Most men would have considered this a sufficient reason for leaving the field. Not so with Col. C. It had the opposite tendency. It raised his fighting temper to a higher point. And manfully did he advance with his companions in arms; fearlessly leading them on as they charged over the field after the butternut hosts; - many of whom will fight no more. And not only did the Lieutenant Col. fight bravely while the fight lasted, but he and the Adj. spent nearly all of the following night looking after the interest and comfort of the men of our Regiment."<sup>46</sup>

During this charge, Eli Heylin, nephew of Seth Snyder, publisher of Celina's *Western Standard*, was mortally wounded.

"He was entirely insensible after he received the fatal blow, but he, with the rest of the boys who died in that awful charge, showed their bravery and courage like soldiers," wrote Company F Captain N.L. Hibbard. "We record the death of Prosser Duer, Henry Hyler and George W. Mapes, who fell in the same charge and about the same time. We also record, as slightly wounded, J.S. Bice and William Hottle."<sup>47</sup>

"...I found that," Lieutenant Col. John E. Cummins wrote later to Col. Price, "with but few exceptions, the men rallied and went back into action. The conduct of the officers and men of the regiment was all that could be asked, and I might do injustice to some to mention particular instances of good conduct."<sup>48</sup>

Morrow thought at least one man was worthy of special mention.

Our Color Sergeant, M.E. Thorn, of Sidney, is a regular hero. After re-forming near the river, an officer of another regiment asked Thorn where he belonged? The Ninety-ninth was the reply. - Then fall in here, said the officer. No be d---d if I will, replied T. I will wave this flag over the Ninety-ninth Ohio or I will wave it nowhere. 'Men of the Ninety-ninth, rally around your own flag,' shouted Thorn, 'and follow me.' Suiting the action to the request, away he marched over the field with the coolness of Ney and courage of Murst. Hurrah for Thorn and his flag. - Bravely did he throw its stars and stripes to the breeze amid the tumultuous storm of battle, and triumphantly did he bear it from the field crimsoned with human blood. If the military authorities do what I believe to be a reasonable duty, they will promote Thorn for gallant conduct in battle.<sup>49</sup>

### ***The Rebs Skeddadle***

#### **Private Early to Mrs. Early, from Murfreesboro, January 9, 1863:**

They could not stand us but a little while till they run like whiteheads. We retook all our ground and a mile or so more but how we got across that field I can't tell, but the boys most all through safe. There was about ten or fifteen killed and forty or fifty wounded. Abe Knop [Co. E's Private Abram Koop] had three or four holes shot

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<sup>46</sup> Morrow

<sup>47</sup> "The Killed and Wounded in Company F, Ninety-ninth Regiment," *The Western Standard*, January 29, 1963.

<sup>48</sup> *O.R.*, Vol XX/1, Series 1, S#29, Report No. 164, Report of Lieut. Colonel John E. Cummins, p. 616.

<sup>49</sup> "?," *Lima Gazette*, February 4, 1863.

## ***Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment***

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thought his overcoat and Noah Early [Private, Co. E] had his gun shot out of his hand. David Miller got through safe. He is well.<sup>50</sup> We most all lost our knapsacks (and) I mine. I had one blanket it it, one pair of drawers, one pair of socks and my letter packet and all that paper and envelopes that you sent me and the most of all was your picture. I guess the Rebels has got them and that white handkerchief and suspenders is gone too, but this is nothing compared with life. I got another knapsack worth as much as mine."<sup>51</sup>

"...our infantry being re-formed and largely re-inforced, pursued the retreating foe for a mile and a half," calculated Morrow. "The conflict was terrible beyond anything I could have conceived."<sup>52</sup>

Young described the action with Confederate eyes.

Coupled with this condition and correlative to it, a battery of Growes and a part of their infantry had been cut off from the ford and seeing our confused condition, rallied, reformed and opened fire on our advanced right now along the river bank. Confronted in front by their infantry, with the river intervening; swept by their artillery from the left and now attacked by both infantry and artillery by an oblique fire from the right, we found ourselves in a helpless condition, from which it looked like an impossibility to escape; and but for the fact that two or three batteries had been ordered into position to check the threatened advance of the enemy and thereby distract their attention, we doubtless would have fared still worse.

We rallied some distance to the right of where we started and found that many, very many, of our noblest, truest and best had fallen. Some of them were left on the field, among whom was my military preceptor, advisor and dear friend, Captain Bramblett, who fell into the hands of the enemy and who died a few days after in Nashville.<sup>53</sup>

### ***The Loss of Battle***

The brigade captured some six or seven pieces of artillery, all the Rebels had used in their attack.

"The artillery kept up a desultory fire until after dark," the Third Wisconsin's Bradt wrote, "then our battery crossed the river for the last time and took up a position in the darkness where we were at first. We were advanced over dead and wounded to this position. The night was a hard one as it rained incessantly, and the pitious cries of the wounded was heartrending. Those who could speak would say that it really rained cannonballs and from the pile of dead no one could doubt it. All that night it rained and the mud was deep. We had nothing to eat."<sup>54</sup>

**Lt. Colonel Cummins to Mrs. Cummins, from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, January 9, 1863:**

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<sup>50</sup> Co. E Private David D. Miller would die in just a few weeks on March 2, in camp near Murfreesboro.

<sup>51</sup> Early, *Letters Home*, January 9, 1863, p. 12

<sup>52</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

<sup>53</sup> Young, *Reminiscences*, p. 50

<sup>54</sup> Hiram Henry Gillespie Bradt. *History of the Services of the Third Battery of Wisconsin Light Artillery*, p. 17.

## *A Shouting of Orders*

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Our loss is not ascertained (i.e. Ninety-ninth) is fourteen killed, forty-four wounded, thirty-three missing, some of whom we knew to be wounded. Two officers were killed, two lieutenants wounded, and one lieutenant wounded and taken prisoner.<sup>55</sup> We have only the adjutant, four company officers, and myself for duty. Colonel Swaine was wounded slightly in the right arm with a shell and has gone home<sup>56</sup>, so I am again commanding the regiment. I was over the battlefield the night of fight, looking for our dead and wounded. The sight was sickening. Headless, armless, legless men, dead men torn to pieces by shells, wounded men lacerated beyond description. The Rebels and Union men mingled together. A battle and its [?] are to be seen cannot be described. I cannot write well enough to describe my impressions of the fight now. Our men captured nine pieces of artillery that Friday evening.

"We lost a great many men, but their loss was a great deal the heaviest," Honnell estimated. "The battlefield presented a heart sickening sight that night. Dead, dying and wounded laying in all directions. We went to work and carried in all our wounded and had their wounds dressed yet that night. But the Rebs could not be tended to till the next day..."<sup>57</sup> Rebel Johnny Green agreed.

Our gallant General Hanson was killed, or rather mortally wounded. We brought him back and reformed upon the position we occupied before the attack. But we had over four-hundred killed and wounded in this charge lasting one hour and twenty minutes; this falling upon our brigade along, the other three brigades lost not so heavily, but their loss was appalling.

This night of sleet and discouragement was trying but never a man faltered. With meager rations, loaded guns and quick eye they went out on picket duty that night to watch lest the enemy, encouraged by our repulse, should attempt to over power us. But they had received severe punishment and did not relish the idea of trying to drive men who seemed determined to sell their lives at such fearful cost to the enemy who dared approach them."<sup>58</sup>

"About 10 p.m., we removed Scott from the field to the hospital. I returned to the battle ground, and at 4 o'clock next morning, one of our men handed me the Captain's sword, which I carried to him soon after, and on seeing it, despite the pain he was suffering, he smiled as if a friend had arrived and exclaimed: 'Good for you, Chaplain; the Rebels did not get my sword.' Captain Scott is gone to the grave. I stood by him as he crossed the chilly flood. His sword is in my keeping, and, God willing, I will deliver it to his afflicted wife, with the assurance that he wore it with honor to himself and profit to the Union cause."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Cummins' January 4, report to Colonel Price reported the Ninety-ninth lost one commissioned officer and eleven enlisted men killed; three commissioned officers and forty-one enlisted men wounded; one commissioned officer and thirty-five enlisted men missing. He amended this report on January 24, to report twelve enlisted men and one commissioned officer killed; one commissioned officer and twenty-nine enlisted men missing. . *O.R.*, Series I, XX/1, S#29, Report No. 164, Report of Lieut. Colonel John E. Cummins, p. 616

<sup>56</sup> Because of his wounds Swaine was granted a 30-day furlough on January 6.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas C. Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, January 5, 1863, Ohio Historical Society Archives.

<sup>58</sup> Pillow's brigade lost 402, Hanson's 401, Preston's 376, and Adams' 159. *O.R.*, Series I, XX/1, pt. 1, p. 675

<sup>59</sup> "?," *Lima Gazette*, February 4, 1863.

## Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment

Scott left a widow and two children in Van Wert.

Chaplain Morrow reflected further upon the horror of his first real battlefield.

"As I toiled over the bloody field the night of January 2d, nearly all night, in darkness and rain, how often I thought of the quiet homes and loved ones there, that would never greet the return of the manly forms that lay cold and silent about me. What our loss has been I cannot tell, but have no doubt the Rebel loss in killed and wounded, far exceeds ours. We also took many prisoners."<sup>60</sup>

**1st Lieutenant Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, from near Murfreesboro, January 5, 1863:**

Our company escaped miraculously for the position they were in. Jas. Luckey was mortally wounded and died the same night [Company C had a Private Nathaniel J. Luckey who entered service on July 25, 1862. Regimental roster says no records subsequent to enlistment are available]. Dirick Duerbalt [Company C Private Duerbalt, thirty, entered service on August 22, 1862. According to regimental roster was sent to Nashville hospital. Supposed to be dead, but no further record found] we thought was killed on the field, but he was found today under a pile of rails. He is still alive, but I think he will die. Aaron Baldwin [Aaron M. Baldwin, an eighteen-year old private, entered service on August 6, 1862, was transferred to Company B, Fiftieth, on December 31, 1864], William [H.] Shaw [nineteen years old when entered service on July 28, 1862 as a Sgt. Promoted to 1st Lieutenant on February 2, 1863. Transferred to Company C, Fiftieth, on December 31, 1864], William Wilkinson [age twenty-five at enlistment on August 1, 1862. Killed in action at Chickamauga on September 20, 1862] and Wm. [B.] Flesher [Nineteen when enlisted, July 24, 1862, as a private. Mustered out at Camp Dennison, Ohio, May 18, 1865 as William B. Fletcher] are still missing. We think they are prisoners. Comp. H lost some, but none that you know. There is one-hundred thirteen killed, wounded and missing in our regiment. The Rebs evacuated Murfreesboro last night. We have marching orders, but I don't know the direction.<sup>61</sup>

"Saturday (January 3) it was comparatively quiet until nearly dark," Cummins wrote Hattie, "when the Union men attacked one of the Rebel entrenchments, captured them and drove the Rebels back in confusion."

"You can form some idea of the severity of the battle," Morrow explains, "when I inform you that the Third Division of the left wing alone lost one-thousand one-hundred eighty-one men. The Ninety-ninth went into action with a little less than four-hundred men, and lost seventy-two killed, wounded and missing. Fourteen were killed, forty-four wounded, and the remaining thirty-four missing. Of this later number, some are known to be wounded. Others were no doubt made prisoners."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas C. Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, January 5, 1863, Ohio Historical Society Archives.

<sup>62</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

## ***A Shouting of Orders***

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The Thirty-fifth Indiana lost one-hundred twenty-seven killed, wounded and missing, including seven officers.<sup>63</sup> The Fifty-first suffered twenty-four killed, one-hundred twenty-two wounded and forty-four captured or missing.<sup>64</sup>

"When the battle was over I saw dead men almost half buried in the mud," recalled Private Jacob Early. "Our men was taken care of immediately, but the Rebels laid there till the battle was over. Some of them laid four or five days. I was over the battleground two days after the battle was over and it was an awful sight. Some had their heads shot off and some had both legs shot off, but the most of them was shot with a coming rifle ball. Our men had to bury all the dead. There was two men detailed out of each company. David Lyons was one of them in our company. I never want to witness another such a sight. I say no more about the fight for I could write all night and then could not tell half the sight for it was an awful sight."<sup>65</sup>

Union soldiers, including those of the Ninety-ninth, were still burying the Confederate dead on January 5.

"They did not fight that long in one place," Honnell recalled of his regiment's involvement in the Stones River fighting, "but the line of battle was seven or eight miles long and there was never five minutes at a time. But what there was firing some where along the line and most of the time it was one continual roar of artillery and musketry. We lay in line of battle all the time..."<sup>66</sup>

"Our Regiment was commanded by Col. Swaine, a finished gentleman and an accomplished officer," Morrow observed. "And for the length of time he has been with us, it is wonderful how he has gained the esteem and affection of both officers and men. Esteem is not the right word. We love him, because of his manly qualities and his great worth as a gentleman and a soldier. The Col. was wounded by a fragment of a shell, but I am thankful, not seriously, and I pray that God may preserve his life for many years, as the country could illy afford to loose such an officer."<sup>67</sup>

"Colonel Swaine, who was in command and is wounded and absent from the regiment, sends back word that he was well satisfied with the conduct of all the officers and men of his command, and that they obeyed every order which he gave, with promptness," reported the Ninety-ninth's Lieutenant Colonel John E. Cummins to the Third Brigade's Colonel Price.<sup>68</sup>

### **Colonel Cummins to Mrs. Cummins, from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, January 9, 1863:**

My notion is we made but little of the fight. It was a dear bought victory. As to the 2nd of January fight in which we engaged I think our brigade and division was very badly mangled. That is private. I am willing to fight every day, but don't like to be sacrificed by incompetent men. As to the Ninety-ninth I am proud of it. I know now they have courage and will fight well. You will hear more of it through the

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<sup>63</sup> T. Kevin Griffin, *The 1st Irish, Thirty-fifth Indiana*, pp. 84

<sup>64</sup> Fred McDavitt, "The 51st Ohio Volunteer Infantry (OVI): A Regimental History," *Virginia Country's Civil War*, Vol. XII, p. 23

<sup>65</sup> Jacob Early, January 13, 1863, *Letters Home*, p. 13

<sup>66</sup> Thomas C. Honnell to Benjamin C. Epler, January 5, 1863, Ohio Historical Society Archives.

<sup>67</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

<sup>68</sup> *O.R.*, Vol. XX, Series 1, S#29, Report No. 164, Report of Lieut. Colonel John E. Cummins, p. 616.

## *Ninety-ninth Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment*

newspapers. I am anxious to see the official reports. I saw Captain Frankenberer since the fight. He escaped scot free. Tell the girls Ben is well and not injured in the least.<sup>69</sup>

Swaine was promoted to Brevet Colonel, December 31, on the strength of his duty at Murfreesboro.<sup>70</sup>

"It affords me pleasure to write that Col. Swain[e] informs me personally that every officer and private of the Ninety-ninth did their duty," Morrow related to his Lima readers. "Not a man skulked nor ingloriously fled. Nor did they attempt to fall back until ordered to do so. Hurrah for the Ninety-ninth Ohio. May heaven bless the brave men of the Regiment."

"Our Lieutenant [Colonel] Cummins, likewise proved himself an excellent officer and a cool and daring soldier on that warmly contested field," Morrow reported. "When danger and death threatened all, exposed to the terrible fire of the foe, he moved promptly in the discharge of duty. And mark you, it required an iron will and lion's heart to be cool in such a deadly struggle.

It was in such a battle that the Colonel's courage was tested. Into the fight he carried beside his sword, an ordinary revolver."<sup>71</sup>

Despite his wound, Cummins remained on duty.

Adjutant Benjamin F. Lefever was struck by shell fragments, but his wounds did not keep him from duty.

"My friend, 'Ben,' as we familiarly call the Adjutant," Morrow wrote, "conducted himself with great coolness during the fight, and were I close to the promoting power I would say, give 'Ben' a push, as he is made of that kind of material that will not be injured by prosperity."<sup>72</sup>

### **Lt. Colonel Cummins Diary, January 4, 1863:**

I write on the battlefield near Murfreesboro to relieve your anxiety. We have been where the bullets and bombshells whistled around for the past week but were not actually in the engagement until day before yesterday.

Colonel Swaine is wounded in the right arm and is in the hospital. I am in command. I am slightly wounded on thumb and forefinger of right hand and write this with the two smallest fingers with much difficulty.

The fight is not yet over. The loss has been horrible. I can't tell the number. Ben is all right, not a scratch. The regiment has lost nine killed, forty-six wounded and fifty-eight missing. Of the wounded, four are officers, which don't include me. This is my official report. Tell father's folks Ed Walkup is all right. We only [?] three-

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<sup>69</sup> Lieutenant Colonel John E. Cummins to Harriet Cummins, January 9, 1863. Collection of Roger D. Hunt.

<sup>70</sup> Bvt. Major General George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891), p. 494

<sup>71</sup> "?," *Lima Gazette*, February 4, 1863.

<sup>72</sup> "Letter from the Ninety-ninth Ohio," *Lima Gazette*, January 28, 1863.

## *A Shouting of Orders*

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hundred sixty-nine men in the fight. There will be desperate fighting here yet. I will write more when I get an opportunity.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Lieutenant Colonel John E. Cummins to Harriet Cummins, January 4, 1863. Collection of Roger D. Hunt.