

from the personal memoirs
of General Phisterer

1862 US

51.

Bowling Green via Campbellsville, Greensburg and Oct. 30th near Little Barren River. We were now part of the Center, of the Army of the Cumberland. Distance marched this month two hundred and thirty three miles.

November 1st camped at Cave City; 2nd, near Dripping Spring and 3rd, near Bowling Green. On the 7th ordered to Mitchelville, Tenn.; on the 13th to South Tunnel near Gallatin. On the 23th en route to Belloteford via Gatesford and Bledsoe's Creek, to guard the crossings of the Cumberland River; a new company of the regiment joined us. Distance marched one hundred and sixteen miles.

December 20th, left Belloteford for Cunningham's ford; on the 22nd passed through Gallatin to Pilot Knob; on the 24th to Edgefield and Dec. 25th to Nashville, camped at the Franklin Turnpike and there joined the Regular Brigade, Rousseau's (3rd) Division, Center (Thomas), Army of the Cumberland (Rosecrans). On the 26th entered on the Murfreesboro campaign, camped on the Petersburg Turnpike; on the 27th near Nolansville; on the 28th at night marched to Stewart's Creek; on the 30th to within four miles of Murfreesboro and on the 31st to the battlefield. I was also acting adjutant of our detachment of two battalions. Distance marched this month eighty four miles.

Battle of Stones River. Dec. 31st, nominally in reserve.

Shortly after 8 o'clock a. m. we were ordered to take position

in the woods to the right. While moving on a woodroad orders came to halt, followed about ten minutes later by directions to return and support our battery. Now our battery should have been ahead of us and before we halted we had seen General Thomas, Colonel Sheperd, our brigade commander, and Lieut. Guenther, the battery commander, in consultation. Major Townsend did not like to go back without positive knowledge that our battery was not ahead of us, so I volunteered to go to the front and the Major sent his orderly back to look for the battery. I followed the woodroad leading north, soon found myself under fire, but was bound to see somebody or something, finally I struck Major Slemmer's battalion of our brigade and asked him, had he seen anything of our battery. He replied that he had not seen anything of the battery nor of anything of anybody else except the enemy. I communicated to him the orders we had received and my errand, and he decided that he would take our orders for his and retire. It seems that he did not receive any orders; when I found him he was almost surrounded and under a heavy fire; had I not reached him his command would have been annihilated or captured. It was my fortune to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor for this little volunteer excursion. But it was very hot there and I did not stand on the order of going, but went. I joined my command which had taken position on the left of our battery, which was giving solid shot and of course we became the re-

ipients of the compliments of the rebel artillery. Major Slemmer had barely re-joined us and taken position on the right of the battery, when out of a dense clump of cedars right in front of us, rushed a brigade to take our battery. Brave fellows, but double shotted canister, and the fire of the supports of the battery were too much for them; their battle flag went down five times and they were badly punished and repulsed, many being captured. Toward noon we received orders to move into the cedars and stop the enemy, to gain time for formation of new lines; our battalion formed front on left company as on drill, and moved by the right flank into the cedars and changed direction to the right; we were the left battalion of the brigade; as we were about to open fire men came up and said not to fire as the remnant of Negley's division was coming to the rear, outflanked and outnumbered; they came and passed through and then, the rebels following them close, opened the most deafening and terrible fire I had and have ever since heard. Men were falling right and left; our color bearer fell dead on the National Color, I got color corporal Paul Fisher to get the flag up and raising it he entangled it in the branches of a little tree; feeling that we could not stay long, and determined that the colors should go with us, I called Lieutenant Bisbee, he disentangled them and carried them for some time. Suddenly my horse gave a jump, I felt something burning my right instep and the saddle

gave way. I jumped off, found my horse shot through the body, the shot going through my right boot and coming out behind the left, reported to Major Townsend, and by his advise stuck to the horse. The purpose of our stand having been obtained, the brigade fell to the rear by battalions, commencing on the right; so that we were the last to retire. When we came out of the cedars we found a line drawn up which retired with us and mixed us up; Major Townsend took the colors and assembled the battalion around him, and then marched across the railroad track; as I was pulling my horse along I was the last of the line; the horse died almost as soon as we were in our new position. We had roll call; while I knew the loss was heavy, it was worse than I thought, over 40 per cent of our command was killed and wounded. When my horse gave out, I took off my revolvers, put them in an ambulance and never saw them again; I carried my luncheon in a rubber blanket fastened back of the saddle, I discarded my luncheon and how sorry I was later for I had to live on the bounty of others, who did not have anything themselves for several days, parched corn, picked up on the field, and horse steaks were eagerly enjoyed. My rubber blanket looked like a sieve from the bullets that had passed through it; I held on to that. Back of us were a number of piles of knapsacks, the enemy's batteries must have taken them for bodies of men, for soon a regular solid shot bombardment of them took place; from the awful to the ridiculous is but a step; right in the line of fire of these batteries a

man was seen coming toward us over the plain, and many were watching him; a shot came along, seemed to strike right in front of him, bounce up and pass over him, while he seemed to make a reverend bow to it; it was ridiculous and the hundreds that saw it could not help but shout and laugh. At night we held one of the advanced lines of the Centre.

1863.

On January 1st we were moved from point to point along the Centre and right wing, and in the afternoon ordered back to Stewart's Creek to protect trains, making most of the march in double time and I did not have a horse; we moved about five miles and then were ordered back, more double time; bivouacked in a piece of woods. On the 2nd as we moved out of bivouack we encountered artillery fire, one ball was rolling on the ground and one of the men thinking to stop it, put out his foot and was doubled up, for there was life in it. We erected works and fortified the central position of our line, at night it rained. On the 3rd we remained in the trenches, and once it looked as though the enemy were going to make an attack on our position. The 4th the enemy had departed; we sent out details to collect our dead, who still marked our line in the cedars; that night I buried our dead, where now the National Cemetery is located, the dead of our two battalions, 50 officers and enlisted men, in two trenches; it was a beautiful and quiet moonlight night. And thus ended the battle of James River or Harrisburg.