



John H. Rerick

THE FORTY-FOURTH

INDIANA

VOLUNTEER INFANTRY

HISTORY OF ITS SERVICES

—IN THE—

WAR OF THE REBELLION

—AND—

A PERSONAL RECORD OF ITS MEMBERS.

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BY

JOHN H. RERICK, M. D.,

SURGEON.

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LETTER FROM COLONEL REED.

morning, and the very last to leave the field. I have already said we engaged the enemy in the afternoon, and drove him inside his entrenchments.

Now all this may not seem of sufficient importance to you, at this late day after the battle, to justify my leaving many matters you refer to unanswered. Nevertheless, I shall have to defer them for another occasion.

We are, as you say, pretty well down into Dixie, and I suppose we shall have a fight before going much further. But I will spare you. With kindest regards to Mrs. Randall and all the other ladies who helped with our flag.

I am very truly yours,

HUGH B. REED.



JOHN H. RERICK,
SURGEON.

CHAPTER XI.

STONE RIVER.

GENERAL CRITTENDEN moved his corps, consisting of Wood's, Palmer's, and Vancleve's divisions, on the 26th, advancing on the Murfreesboro pike, Palmer's division in the advance. There was considerable skirmishing during the day, and General Vancleve went into bivouac in the vicinity of Lavergne that evening, with the enemy apparently in force in the town. The next morning there was a sharp skirmish in the village, during which it was almost wholly consumed by fire. General Vancleve moved through the place and then fled off to the left, some three miles, and bivouacked on Stuart's Creek, where we remained over Sunday.

On Monday, the 29th, we advanced again towards Murfreesboro, and went into bivouac in the rear of Generals Wood's and Palmer's divisions, who were in line of battle in front of the enemy. General Rosecrans came up the next day, the 30th, and established his headquarters a few paces in front of our brigade. During the day other divisions came up and took position. General Crittenden's corps was formed on the left of the Murfreesboro and Nashville pike, with orders to cross Stone River the next morning, and move into Murfreesboro. General Vancleve's division was to cross

at the lower ford and advance against the rebel General Breckenridge. General Wood was to support him on the right, crossing at the upper ford, and General Palmer was to engage the enemy in his front. Next, in the centre, was Thomas's corps, and on the right was McCook's corps. General Rosecrans' plan of battle was to open on the left, and extend the engagement from left to right.

Early on the morning of the 31st, General Vancleve initiated the execution of this plan by moving his division towards the left. The advance brigade was crossing the river, and Colonel Fyffe had just reached the banks of the river, when the movement was arrested by an order for Fyffe to face his brigade about, and march with all possible speed to resist an attack of the enemy's cavalry on the trains in the rear, on the Nashville pike, and about one mile in the rear of the point left in the morning. The enemy had wholly disconcerted the plans of General Rosecrans by a furious onslaught on the extreme right about sunrise, driving back the whole right wing to a right-angle with the centre. Colonel Fyffe reached the point of attack on the trains, but the Union cavalry had already succeeded in repulsing the attack, and in recapturing the trains. The brigade was then ordered to the support of the right, and returning on the pike about half a mile, marched through a cedar wood to an open field. The enemy filled the wood beyond, and also a wood on the right of the field. The brigade advanced across the field, and by some blunder moved far beyond the supporting columns on the right and left. As soon as the men were across the field, the

enemy opened a terrific fire from the front and right. The place was too hot, and the brigade would have been annihilated in a few minutes had it not fallen back, which it did speedily but in order. The lines were again formed near the Nashville pike, and held during the remainder of the day and night. The day was a terrible one. Many brigades and regiments on the right were broken up and scattered, and wandered from place to place, officers in search of their men, and men in search of their officers, until they were gathered up without regard to former organization, and placed in line of action. There was no place of safety within the Union lines. The Surgeons of the Forty-fourth dressed the wounded at times during the day when the balls whizzed about from the four points of the compass.

General Rosecrans re-formed his lines in the darkness of the night of the 31st, and the next morning Vanclève moved his division across Stone River to the point started for the morning before. Colonel Fyffe's brigade was placed some forty rods in front of the river, in face of the enemy, where the Forty-fourth remained all the day of January 1st, 1863, without engagement except picket firing. The morning of the second was opened with a lively artillery duel of about an hour's duration, and sharp skirmishing was continued along the whole line until about 2 o'clock P. M., when the enemy under General Breckenridge advanced in heavy storming columns. The two brigades in front, General Beatty's and Colonel Fyffe's, were forced back to the river, where they were met by supporting columns. A massed bat-

tery of some fifty-eight pieces, that had been collected in anticipation of such a movement, now opened on the enemy. A battle scene ensued that hardly had a parallel during the war. More musketry and artillery firing, probably, occurred in a like number of minutes on longer lines, but not so much on so short a line. The earth trembled under the shock, and it was reported that window-glass was broken by the concussion of the air two miles distant. The noise could hardly have been exceeded by the concentration of several thunder storms. General Breckenridge's columns melted away, and he fled back with their remnants, and the Forty-fourth planted its colors on the enemy's breastworks, and slept that night on the field of battle.

The enemy evacuated Murfreesboro that night and the next day, and General Rosecrans entered the day after.

I have been unable to find any official report of the part performed by the Forty-fourth at the battle of Stone River, and owing to the capture of Colonel Williams, in command, during the furious charge of the enemy, it is probable that none was made. Having been an eye-witness of nearly all its movements, I can testify as to its honorable conduct. Though the brigade was twice repulsed, it was under circumstances that reflected no discredit. An attempt to hold its position in either case would have been utter annihilation. The columns were in each case readily rallied, with the loss of very few stragglers. Lieutenant Dancer, of Co. H, Inspector General on Colonel Fyffe's staff, conducted himself bravely, and was severely wounded. Sergeant

Gordon relates that during the repulse on the left, Captain Cosper, Co. F, was closely pursued by a rebel, who repeatedly ordered him to halt and surrender, or he would shoot. Not heeding the demand, the rebel fired, wounding Cosper in the hand. At that he turned upon his adversary and thrust him through with his bayonet, killing him on the spot. He then continued his retreat.

The Regiment went into action with about 300 men, and lost 8 killed, 52 wounded, and 25 missing. Following are the names, as given in the official report of Surgeon Martin:

KILLED.

Thomas Helsper, Co. B.
John Webster, Co. F.
Jacob Parker, Co. F.
George W. Wallace, Co. F.
Jefferson Shannon, Co. G.
Childs Drake, Co. I.
First Sergeant Franklin Baldwin, Co. I.
Harrison Harwood, Co. K.

WOUNDED.

COMPANY A.
Corporal George W. Pervis, severe flesh wound in leg.
Frederic Swambaugh, in back, dangerously.
Joseph Willins, in leg, slight.

COMPANY B.

Sergeant Albert Ritz, slight flesh wound in foot.
Sergeant William Cartwright, slight flesh wound in leg.
John Cogan, slight flesh wound in head.
William Clark, in finger; amputated.
Scott Eddy, severe flesh wound in hip.
George Scott, in finger; amputated.

Gable Scott, severe flesh wound in thigh.
Samuel Vidner, severe flesh wound in thigh.

COMPANY C.

First Sergeant Sidney Livingston, in leg, slight.
Samuel Sweet, in finger; amputated.
Owen Shaw, in arm, slight.
Jackson Hyser, in nose, slight.
Jacob Smith, fracture of thigh; amputated.

COMPANY D.

John Haller, in chest, mortal.
William Ople, in arm, slight.
Amos Britton, severe flesh wound in leg.
William Rouston, in hand, severe.

COMPANY E.

Sergeant Andrew Reed, in thigh, flesh, severe.
Hiram Biddle, in back, flesh, severe,
F. A. Grable, in shoulder, severe.
Frederic Banta, in shoulder, slight.
John Spurgeon, in leg, severe.

COMPANY F.

David Robison, wounded, and probably prisoner.
P. Robbins, in arm, flesh, severe.
David Greenawalt, in leg, fracture.
Jacob Hicks, in wrist, slightly.
Francis A. Johnson, in back and elbow, slight;
George Casper, in finger; amputated.
Bennett Robe, in arm, flesh.
Lewis Tiffany, hip, severe.
Asa Harwood, arm, severe.
Chester Grimmerman, in foot.
Robin E. Ford, in thigh, flesh, slight.

COMPANY G.

Lucius McGowan, in thigh, flesh, slight.

COMPANY H.

Lieutenant J. H. Dancer, Brigade Inspector, in thigh, flesh, severe.

Peter Alsbaugh, wounded, and probably prisoner.
 Victor Ketchum, in thigh, flesh, severe.
 Van Buren Ketchum, in leg, severe.
 John J. Crist, in foot, severe.

COMPANY I.

Frederick Lavenir, in side and arm, severe.
 Frederick Stroup, in arm, slight.
 John Robinson, in wrist, slight.
 Martin Danner, in shoulder, severe.
 James A. Smith.
 Martin G. Hurd, in head; missing.
 John Lesher, character unknown.

COMPANY K.

Sergeant Frank Willis, in foot, slight.
 Samuel Squires, in hand, severe.
 Orlando Wright, in knee, serious.

CHAPTER XII.

MURFREESBORO.

The Army of the Cumberland moved into Murfreesboro, and went into camp in the vicinity, January 5th, 1863, General Crittenden's corps taking position on the left along the Lebanon pike. The Forty-fourth was located about one mile out, in the vicinity of the Spence mansion, which was assigned to Surgeon Martin for hospital purposes. The house was a commodious brick residence, richly furnished when abandoned by the owner during the evacuation. The Regiment passed the beautiful place in its northward march in September previous, and the lady of the house tauntingly asked some of the boys who called, "Why are you going north?" The sick boys, as they came in, were now glad she had gone south. The proprietor, we believe, was a rebel General.

Assistant Surgeons Rerrick and Carr were detailed for work in the general field hospital in the rear of the battle-field. The former worked there about two weeks, when he was taken severely sick, and was brought to the Spence house, where he lay until about the middle of February, when he was granted leave of absence and sent home in charge of a nurse, with little expectation of ever being able to return. But he did return, in