

HELENA'S LEADING BUSINESS HOUSES.

INCIDENTS OF THE WAR.

Stirring Scenes in the Line from Fredericksburg to Chancellorville.

A Desperate Struggle for the Possession of a Loaded Cannon.

Tough Luck of a Confederate and How He Worked on a Fellow Craftsman's Sympathies.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 1. NEVER shall I forget the fight on Monday, May 4, 1863, near Fredericksburg. It was on the day following the capture of the Heights, Sedgwick's corps, on Sunday afternoon, had left Fredericksburg and marched towards Chancellorville, to effect a junction with Hooker and the main army. That night, he struck the confederates in force at Salem church. The day had been clear and sunny. Without developing the position of the confederate batteries in his front, Uncle John drove into the woods, in an effort to carry everything before him. The New Jersey brigade suffered terribly. The fight lasted till long after nine o'clock.

Next morning Sedgwick drew back a little. He learned that the confederates had swept around his left flank, and recaptured Fredericksburg. It contained the wounded soldiers of the day before. Monday was still bright and sunny. The Sixth corps lay upon the ridge along the Rappahannock above Fredericksburg. About an hour before sundown we could see that the confederates in our front had been reinforced. They were manning for a charge. They came down upon us, five lines deep. The Twenty-sixth New Jersey, of which I was sergeant major, lay in a little depression along a ditch which had been dug by some farmer to drain his land. A Vermont regiment was in the woods at our left. A New York regiment, I think, was posted on our right. A regular battery occupied a slight elevation in our rear. As the confederates advanced, I could hear the officer in charge of the battery yelling to his men: "A second and a half," he shouted. "Blim! blim!" roared the guns. "A second and a quarter," he cried. "Blim! blim!" was the response. "A full second," he roared. "Blim! blim! blim!" answered the guns. "Three-quarters of a second," "Blim! blim! blim!"

The officer was gazing his fuses by the advance of the enemy so that the shells might do the greatest execution. Suddenly, in the rear of artillery, there was a flash all along the line. The confederates had reached our front. They were within forty yards of us. Half our men were on their feet and the other half on their knees. Without orders, they kept up an incessant fire. The Johnnies were yelling at the top of their voices, and at least half of them were swelling the refrain with their muskets. At this instant, our lieutenant-colonel, a brother of Gen. Martindale, who sat on his horse in the rear of the regiment, shouted: "Ten-t-i-o-n."

A moment afterward, the orderly of the second company appeared and took command in like manner. Five minutes afterward the lieutenant-colonel ordered me to look after the pickets. In the darkness, I moved the pickets towards the enemy. Each man took his intervals. Stopping close to the ground and looking up I could see their forms outlined against the sky. I could hear each and every one of them. The ground was covered with the killed and wounded. Occasionally a wounded man tried to crawl towards our line. Everything, even the stumps, seemed to be moving. The wounded were packed around dead horses. They crawled there to escape the bullets, using each carcass as a shelter. While stooping to the ground and glancing around I saw a form moving past our line. Beyond it I could see the outline of Corporal Nelson, a member of our regiment. I called him to me. He accented the stranger. He was a confederate picket. The lines were passing each other in the darkness. When I asked what regiment he belonged to he replied: "The Thirtieth Mississippi." "Well, off with your traps," I said. "We're Jerseymen."

"Good God!" he exclaimed, not in terror, but astonishment. Away went his cow-skin knapsack. He threw down his gun and shook off his accoutrements. "You'd better keep your haversack," I said, "you'll want that." It was made of undressed cowskin. A pair of new shoes were tied to it. He expressed great anxiety concerning the shoes. He was afraid that some Yank would confiscate them. At this moment we were called in. He was my prisoner. I told him to stick close to me and I would protect him. He said that he lived in Pontiac, Miss., and that he was a printer. Being a printer myself I felt warmly toward him. When I reached the line the regiment was moving off in the darkness. It moved back a mile or more till it reached the earthworks near Bank's ford. They had been thrown up by Wright and Jenkins' confederate brigades some days before this. Below them a pontoon bridge was being laid, upon which we were to recross the Rappahannock. Before we reached the earthworks the confederate prisoner had enlisted my sympathies. His heart was nearly broken. He had fought with the army of Virginia in every battle since its formation. He was anxiously seeking promotion.

"I am the unluckiest vermin in the world," he said to me. "I never could get shot of bad luck. Now, if I hadn't been caught here to-night, I would have been made a corporal to-morrow. The captain told me that the colonel was going to make me a corporal, but my bad luck's turned up again. I've been totting it all my life, and I don't see nary a chance of promotion now." His feelings were so deep and his voice so broken, that I fancied there were tears in his eyes. My sympathies overcame my sense of duty. I had had considerable bad luck myself. I finally turned to him, as we were passing a dead horse, and said: "See here, partner, you had slip out and lay down on the other side of that horse. Your company will be along here inside of half an hour. Shake off your bad luck. I won't stand in the way." As he was about to take cover he discovered that somebody had cut the shoes from his cow-skin haversack. He felt their loss deeply. But he ran to cover and we passed on. Next day Charlie Mulligan, of Belleville, wore the shoes.

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