

THE GREAT BATTLE.

Full Account of All the Operations.

Graphic Description of the Fighting.

THE EXCITING FIGHT OF WEDNESDAY.

Desperate Onslaughts of the Rebels.

BRAVE MEMEANOR OF ROSECRANS

RALLY OF THE UNION TROOPS.

HOW THE REBEL RANKS WERE BROKEN.

WHAT THE SOUTHERN PAPERS SAY.

Reluctance to Admit a Defeat.

DISPATCH FROM GENERAL EWELL.

Gen. Bragg Falls Back to Shelbyville.

UNION MOVEMENTS IN NORTH CAROLINA.

Union Officers in Solitary Confinement.

[Owing to the great interest taken in the details of the battle of Murfreesboro, we lay before our readers a full and complete report of all the operations during the entire week of battles. In doing this, of course, we reproduce such portions of the account as were promptly forwarded to us by telegraph and printed in parts of our editions.]

CINCINNATI, Wednesday, Jan. 7, 1863.

THE BATTLE OF WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31.

Monday and Tuesday were spent as you have been advised—in getting the army into line and securing positions. The great contest commenced on Wednesday morning, and the account of that day I send in full.

A great deal of misapprehension prevails with regard to the nature of the battle-field at Murfreesboro, especially of that portion which was the scene of the bloody struggle of Wednesday.

Even the maps furnished to officers by the indefatigable Corps of Topographical Engineers, failed to exhibit correctly the features of the vicinity. The error seems to be the confounding together of two distinct and separate streams—Stone River, which rises in the northern part of Rutherford County, and flows past Stewart's Ferry, almost directly north of the Cumberland; and Stone River, which takes its rise in the southern extremity of Rutherford and the eastern part of Campbell, and after traversing both of these and a portion of Davidson, enters the Cumberland about 10 miles below the latter.

It is the western branch of the latter which flows past Murfreesboro, and constitutes the river of which such frequent mention must be made in all accounts of this battle.

No map I have ever yet seen represents correctly the position of this stream, and, of course, I have not myself time to trace it out, but when our line of battle was formed in front of the town on Wednesday morning, our left wing rested upon the river, and the men of Van Cleve's Division filled their canteens with water from the same.

At this place the river flows almost in a northern direction, its course when passing the town being nearly due west. I noted accurately the position of the various brigades on Wednesday morning, but as there were so many complicated movements during the day, scarcely any brigades actually fighting in the same order in which it was first posted, I deem it unnecessary to mention the place of each.

Gen. McCook's command, which is the right wing of the army, consists of three divisions—Johnson's, Davis's, and Sheridan's—posted from right to left, in the order in which I have named them, Johnson's and Davis's being thrown forward and to the right, so as to form a line which made a considerable angle with that of the remainder of the army.

Gen. Sheridan's Division was withdrawn somewhat on the left, and acted as a reserve for the right of the center, commanded by Gen. Thomas; but two divisions were present, Negley's and Rosecrans's, stationed from right to left in the order named, Rosecrans's being somewhat withdrawn and constituting the reserves on the center. The left wing of the army, under the command of Gen. Crittenden, was posted in the following order: Palmer on the right, Wood in the center, and Van Cleve on the left. A part of Palmer's and also Van Cleve's being thrown slightly forward.

The enemy's line stretched transversely across Stone River, from the Lebanon pike on the right to the Franklin road on their left. At the beginning of the battle it was considerably overlapped by our own right, when McCook had finally got into position. Hardee commanded the Rebel left, consisting of Cheatham's, McCook's and Withers's divisions. McCook being on the extreme left of the wing and Cheatham in the center. The wing was reinforced on Tuesday night by the addition of Claiborne's, formerly Buckner's division.

Bishop Polk led the Rebel right consisting of Preston Smith's and Breckinridge's Divisions and Lieut.-Gen. Kirby Smith led the divisions in the Rebel center. The division of Breckinridge was on the extreme Rebel right. Beside these there were several independent detachments, but it is extremely probable that with these and the reinforcements afterward received, the Rebel army did not outnumber even if it equaled our own.

The field of battle, in the center, was mostly a plain, going toward Murfreesboro. There was a slight elevation of cleared ground on both sides of the turnpike, and some patches of woodland, sufficient to conceal the greater portion of our troops until they should be ready to advance.

Behind the woods concealing our foremost lines, and to the left of those which lie on the left of the turnpike, on open and slightly elevated ground, extending to the river. This formed the key to our entire position, and it was here that the greater portion of the wagons were packed for safety.

On the left, some corn-fields extended to the river, and on the other side of the stream rose a low, wooded hill.

The ground upon the right was a succession of dense cedar thickets, open spaces where the rocks came to the surface and nothing could grow, beds of tolerable timber and small irregular-shaped fields. The pike and railroad ran near each other.

In the elevated open space which formed the key to our position from a point where our line of battle crossed both, a distance of about a mile and a half, there was a small stream, the water of which it is just 25 miles to Nashville. A number

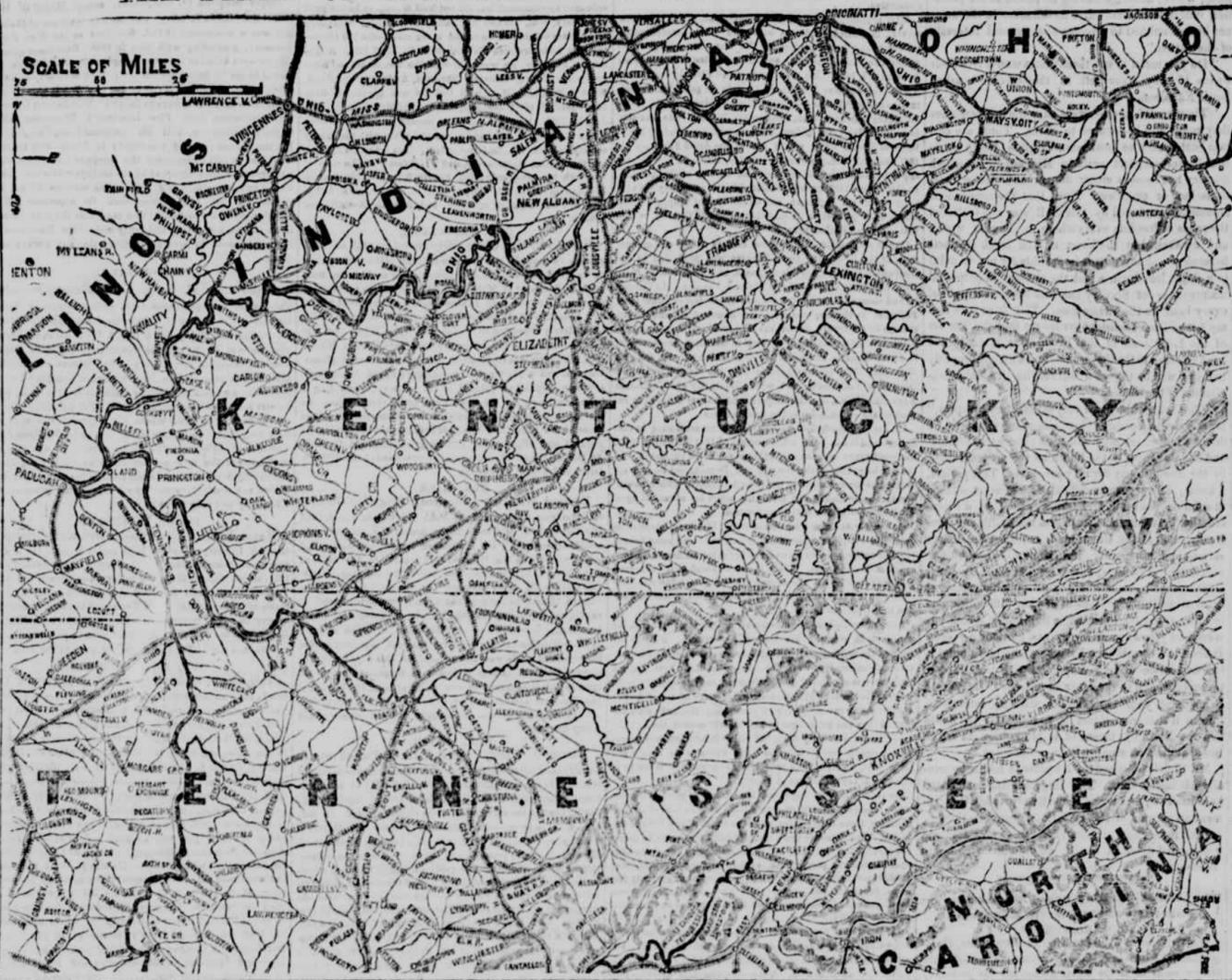
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THE FIELD OF OPERATIONS IN KENTUCKY AND TENNESSEE.



In order to give the reader a clear idea of the locality of the late glorious work of Gen. Rosecrans below Nashville, and of Gen. Carter on the railroad east of Knoxville, we present the above Map of Kentucky and Tennessee, by far the most accurate and complete of any yet published. Every place, railroad, and stream of consequence is plainly set down.

of horses were situated in different parts of the field, but none of them except the brick building of which the inside was burned out the day before played any important part.

The sun had not yet risen on Wednesday morning when the firing commenced upon the right. The 1st Missouri battery, Capt. Eiseck and the 1st Illinois, Capt. Houghton, shelled the Rebels out of a point of woods in front of Sheridan's division, which now slightly advanced. The enemy threw himself upon Sheridan with terrible energy, but was three times repulsed.

Again he advanced with larger numbers and greater desperation than before, and Sheridan's men were compelled for a moment to give ground. It was only a moment, however. The brave and noble Sill, assisted by other daring officers, soon rallied the retreating troops. The flashing banner of the stars once more advanced, and although Sill purchased victory with his life, the Rebels were repulsed and driven from this quarter of the field.

It was a few minutes after 8 when this occurred, and at the same time the sun broke through some cold-looking clouds and flashed a clear, bright light over the field. There had not elapsed even five minutes since the body of the dead General Sill, when all attention was directed to the extreme right. Three divisions of the enemy, McCook's, Claiborne's, and Cheatham's, had advanced in massive columns and charged impetuously upon Johnson and Davis. A portion of the infantry in Johnson's division immediately broke, almost, indeed, before they had taken their arms from the stack, and one of the batteries, Edgerton, was taken before it fired the third round.

Poor Edgerton! It was not his fault. A truer, better, braver young man is seldom found than he. It was his greatest ambition to take part in a battle; and I remember well how often and how earnestly he deplored that separation from the old Third Division which prevented him from taking part in the battle of Perryville.

His hour came at last. It found him ready; but those upon whom he had a right to rely to give him timely notice of the enemy's arrival failed to do so, and ere his guns could be loaded and discharged three times the Rebel bayonets had swept away his men, and he himself fell wounded and bleeding into the hands of the foe.

The gallant and earnest Capt. Simonsen fought like a hero as he is, and brought off all but two of his guns. Capt. Goodspeed strenuously endeavored, after firing several rounds, to save his cannon but could only succeed in getting away with two of them. Gen. Kirk of Illinois, commanding one of the brigades in Johnson's division, was severely wounded while endeavoring to rally his regiments. The enemy succeeded in getting the right flank completely hemmed in. A large number of officers of every grade were shot down while standing almost at the muzzles of the Rebel muskets. The brigades and regiments rushed upon one another in disgraceful disorder, and the route of the division became irretrievable.

I suppose I shall raise a storm about my head for saying so, but I can't, from all that I have heard, come to any other conclusion than that the right wing of our army was completely surprised, and that, too, under circumstances which should have rendered it particularly careful and vigilant.

Whether Gen. McCook or Gen. Johnson is to blame for this, impartial investigation will hereafter determine. At present the sentiment of the entire army is extremely hostile to both, and I imagine it will not be many days before there are important changes in leadership of the 14th Army Corps.

Brigade after brigade, battery after battery, from Palmer's, Negley's, and Rosecrans's divisions, were sent into the midst of the thickets to check the progress of the foe and rally the fugitives, but all in turn were either crushed by the flying cohorts, broken by the impetuosity of the foe, and put to confused flight, or compelled to retire and extricate themselves in the best manner that seemed to offer.

The history of the combat in those dark cedar thickets will never be known. No man could see even the whole of his regiment, and no one will ever be able to tell who they were that fought bravest, and they who proved recreant to their trust.

I know that there were cowardice displayed, but I know, too, that there was shown by many officers and regiments as lofty a heroism as that which distinguished and immortalized the followers of Godfrey or the Cid; but, in spite of heroism and devotion, in spite of desperate struggles which marked every fresh advance of the foe, in spite of a awful sacrifice of life on the part of the officers and soldiers of the Union army, the Rebels still steadily pushed forward and came nearer to the turnpike!

Nearly two miles and a half the right wing of our army had been driven, and faintness of heart came over me as the destruction of our whole army seemed to stare us in the face; but the word went forth from Rosecrans. The flower of the left wing and the center of the right. The right of Davis's division, assisted at the same time as Johnson's, gave way simultaneously, and the route of the remainder seemed to follow as a matter of course. This left to Gen. Sheridan the task of repelling the hideous, successful onset of the foe. Never did man labor more faithfully than he to perform his task, and never was a leader seconded by more gallant soldiers.

This division formed a kind of pivot upon which the broken right wing turned in its flight, and its perilous condition can easily be imagined when the flight of Davis's Division left it without any protection from the triumphant enemy who now swarmed upon its front and right flank; but it fought until a fourth of its number lay bleeding and dying upon the field, and till both remaining Brigade-Commanders, Col. Roberts and Col. Schaeffer, had met with the same fate as Gen. Sill; then it gave way, and as in almost every instance of the kind, retreat was changed to route only less complete than that of the troops of Johnson and Davis.

All these divisions were now hurled back together into the immense cedar thickets which skirt the turnpike, and were hurried over toward the right, and massed rank behind rank in an array of imposing grandeur along the turnpike and facing to the woods through which the Rebels were advancing. The scene at this time was grand and awful as anything that I ever expect to witness until the day of judgment.

I stood in the midst and upon the highest point of the somewhat elevated space, being between the turnpike and the railroad, and forming the key to our entire position. As the Rebels once obtain possession of it, and the immense train of wagons packed along the turnpike, and the Union army was irretrievably ruined. Even its line of retreat would be cut off, and nothing could save it from utter slaughter, and capture—and yet each minute it became more and more plausibly evident that all the reinforcements which had been hurried into the woods to sustain and rally the broken right wing and check the progress of the enemy in that direction, had proved inadequate to the task, and had in turn been overthrown by the great mass which was struggling in inextricable disorder through the woods.

Such sounds as proceeded from that gloomy forest of pines and cedars were enough to appall with terror the stoutest hearts. The roar of cannon, the crashing of shot through the trees, the whizzing and rattling of the shells, the uninterrupted rattle of thirty thousand muskets, all mingled in one prophetic and tremendous volume of sound, as though the mountains of heaven had been rolled together

and each individual burst of celestial artillery had been rendered perpetual. Above it all could be heard the wild cheers of the traitorous host, as body after body of our troops gave way and were pushed toward the turnpike.

Nearer and nearer came the storm, louder and louder resounded the tumult of battle. The immense train of wagons parked along the road, suddenly seemed to tremble with struggling life, and every species of army vehicle, propelled by frightened mules and horses rolled and rattled away pell mell in an opposite direction, pressing onward. The shouts and cries of the terrified teamsters, urging their teams to the top of their speed, were mingled with the howls of sound which swayed and surged over the field.

Everything now depended upon the regiments and batteries which the genius of Rosecrans had massed along the turnpike to receive the enemy when he should emerge from the woods in pursuit of our broken and flying battalions. Suddenly the route became visible, and a crowd of 10,000 fugitives, presenting every possible phase of wild and unaccountable disorder, burst from the cedar thickets, and rushed into the open space between them and the turnpike. Among them all, perhaps, no half dozen members of the same regiment could have been found together.

Thick and fast the bullets of the enemy fell among them, and as they were shot down, but still the number constantly increased by reason of the fresh cohorts which burst every moment from the thickets. It was with the greatest difficulty that some of the regiments which had been massed together, as a sort of reserve force, to withstand and, if possible, drive back the victorious cohorts of treason, could prevent their ranks from being crushed or broken by the mass of fugitives.

From my position upon the elevated ground between the railroad and turnpike, I could view the whole scene, and with an intensity of interest and unalloyed emotion, which I can find no language to express, I watched the result when the desperate soldiers of the rebellion should enter the open space. A tempest of iron was whistling all around my head, but for the first time since I began to participate in the transactions of the terrible war, they whistled and burst unheeded.

I make no pretensions to extraordinary physical endurance. He who says that amid the horrors of a battle he experiences no feeling of awe, and sometimes a shivering awe, is a liar, an idiot, or a maniac. But at this time I felt not even retired, even if I had been inclined; my feet were rooted to the spot; my gaze was fascinated and fixed to the quarter where I expected the enemy to appear, and not an earth-quake rent the earth beneath me. I could not have moved from the spot until I knew from the testimony of my own eyesight whether or no the troops upon whom rest the last hope of the Union army were like the rest to be beaten and overthrown. It was not in consequence of superior physical courage that I remained there, but from the mental impossibility of going elsewhere.

The flower of our troops were ranged in order behind me, and I had no fears for the result unless one of these unaccountable panics, which sometimes run, even in an army of veterans, should seize upon our yet untried battalions. Yet these were men not liable to panic, men whose lofty courage and devotion to their country caused over-care and extinguished fear.

The flower of our troops was there with the immortal 1st Michigan Battery, and there was Stokes with the guns and equipments furnished by the Chicago Board of Trade, and Menonah and Gamber with their regular artillery, and the troops led by Gen. Wood, comprising some of the finest in the service, and the three famous brigades belonging to the old Third Division.

The 9th, the 17th, and the Regulars, which the brave valor of Rosecrans, assisted by the unflinching courage of Col. Scribner of the 28th Indiana, commanding the Ninth Brigade, and by the splendid abilities of Col. John Beatty of the 2d Ohio, commanding the 17th, had extricated from the woods, into which they had been sent to check the progress of the enemy, in a comparatively unbroken and unshattered condition, a result which to one who knows something of the nature of that fearful combat in the woods, seems little short of miraculous.

Other illustrious corps were there also, whose patriotism and courage I should be glad, even at the early day, to celebrate, if one individual could have known and observed them all. They stood ready to give their lives, but I judged from the horses and

sacrifices will yet be known and appreciated by a grateful nation.

With cool, calm courage Gen. Crittenden awaited the coming storm, and conspicuous among all the rest was the well built form of the Commanding General, his countenance unmoved by the tumult around him, and his thoughtful and animated features expressing a high and patriotic hope, which acted like an inspiration upon every one that beheld him, as he cast his eye over the grand array which he had mustered to repel the foe. He already felt himself master of the situation.

At last the long lines of the enemy emerged from the woods, rank behind rank, and, with a demonic yell, intended to strike terror into the souls of the "Yankees" who stood before them, charged with fearless energy almost to the very muzzles of the cannon, whose dark muzzles yawned upon them. A dazzling sheet of flame burst from the ranks of the Union forces, an awful roar shook the earth, a crash rent the air, the foremost lines of the Rebel host were literally swept from the field, and seemed to melt away like snow flakes before a flame; and then both armies were enveloped in a vast cloud of smoke which hid everything from the eye.

On the still visible ground between the pike and the railroad the tumult redoubled. Not knowing what would be the result of the strife which was raging under the great canopy of smoke that concealed the combatants, the flight of these in charge of the wagons and ambulances became still more rapid and disorderly. Thousands of fugitives from the broken right wing mingled with the terror, and frequently a mass of men, horses and wagons would be crushed and ground together. Every conceivable form of deadly missile whizzed and whirled and burst amid the crowd and terror and dismay raged unceasingly.

The whole disordered mass rushed down as fast as possible toward the river, into which it plunged, pushing and struggling to the other side. The combat under that great cloud of smoke was somewhat similar to that in the woods. No one knows exactly what commotion there was. A shout, a charge, a rush of fire, a recoil, and then all for a time despaired.

For ten minutes the thunder of battle burst forth from the clouds. When our battalions advanced they found no Rebels between the woods and turnpike except the dead, the dying, and the disabled. There were hundreds of these, and their blood soaked and reddened the ground.

Since the annihilation of the Old Guard in their charge at Waterloo, there has probably not been an instance of so great a slaughter in so short a time as that which will hereafter be celebrated in history as much as is the fierce combat which crushed forever the power and prospects of Napoleon.

The Rebel left was now thoroughly repulsed, and our troops, emboldened by their success, pushed after them into the woods, driving them back in turn over a considerable portion of the ground which we at first occupied. The roar of our artillery sounded fiercer and fiercer off, as the different battalions moved on slowly after the retreating foe, and hostile cannon-balls no longer plowed up the earth around me.

But while the enemy was thus retiring from this portion of the field his cavalry made a most impudent dash upon another part of our lines. It will be recollected that when the great struggle was going on the wagon and ammunition trains had been hurled over the railroad toward Stone River.

ran for life. A considerable number were captured, but were afterward retaken.

It was nearly 11 o'clock when Hardee was repulsed, and immediate danger in that quarter was over. He had succeeded in defeating our right wing, and he had not gained our right flank, but he had obtained the baggage and ammunition which he so much coveted, and he had secured a position from which he could have easily cut off our communications with the river.

One of his divisions had been less successful still. While the battle was raging on the right, a half-dozen or more pieces of artillery belonging to Palmer's Division kept up a continual fire upon the Rebel lines in the direction of Murfreesboro in order to prevent an advance from that quarter. Withers happened to be just in range of these cannon, which had been stationed here by Hardee in readiness to charge upon Palmer's division, when the part of our line should be sufficiently weakened by the withdrawal of reinforcements for McCook. The position was a most uncomfortable one, and at every discharge of our artillery some of Withers's men lit the dust.

Goodly almost to madness by the slaughter of his helpless men, the Rebel leader ordered a charge. His men advanced with great impetuosity, but their recklessness was of no avail against the few prompt regiments that stood in their way. The sea might sooner hope by hurling its angry billows against them to break in pieces the solid rocks which confine it. The desperate assaults withdrew at last. Their loss must have been fearful, as they call it the bloodiest struggle of the day.

There was now a lull in the storm, and scarcely a volley of musketry or boom of cannon was heard for three quarters of an hour. Some hope that these bloody scenes were ended for the day, but the Rebel leaders, disappointed by their failure to penetrate to our camp by way of the right wing, were preparing for a bold blow at the center. All the reserves were attached to the center of the army under Polk, and Bragg in person placed himself at the head of columns, and now was presented an imposing spectacle. The nature of the ground in this part of the field was such that every movement of either army could be distinctly seen.

The open fields toward Murfreesboro were smooth enough for a holiday parade ground. A fierce cannonade up the turnpike announced the coming onset, and the Rebel cavalry issue of which I had seen the Rebel cavalry issue on Monday evening the first line of battle miles forth. It came on in magnificent order, and stretching away diagonally across a great sloping field, of which I have so frequently spoken, its length seemed interminable. At a sufficient interval other lines deployed into the open ground parallel with the first, and on the forward battalions were engaged, a third line of battle came forth from the same wood. It seemed that our feeble lines in that direction must be crushed by the weight of those immense masses of living and moving men, but the watchful eye of Rosecrans had detected the Rebel design, even before their first line of battle emerged from among the trees.

The Union army was like a set of chess-men in his hands, and its different brigades and divisions were moved about with as much facility as are pawns and pieces in the royal game. The least exhausted troops of the left and center were hurried forward on the double-quick to combat this new effort of the enemy, and even from the extreme left, where Van Cleve was posted, a brigade was brought over to take part in the defense. The same formidable array of tactics and artillery again confronted the foe as that upon which the violence of horse and corps had spent itself, and severe results followed.

Almost simultaneously a spot of fire leaped forth from each of these opposite sides, and for a few minutes both stood like walls of stone, discharging their deadly missiles into each other's bosoms; then the Rebels attempted to charge, but a storm of lead and iron had burst in their faces and scattered them, sweeping them down as the bog lines of a train, which cross the Sahara are prostrated by the blast of the storm. If their maddens can be called bravery, they indeed were these Rebels brave. As if instructed by the diabolical motive to do a much mischief as possible before they died, they rushed up to the very muzzles of our cannon and hurled their muskets at the heads of our soldiers, and they also showed their heads occasionally when their hearts were pierced by bullets, and tumbled to the earth while endeavoring to take another step in advance.

If either of the soldiers of the Union wavered before the onset, it was only for a moment; and forty minutes from the time the first Rebel line marched forth all three of them had been dashed to pieces, and the survivors of the conflict, flying in confusion from the slope were disappearing in the depths of the wood. The battle was over.

Until 4 o'clock the Rebels continued to fire a cannon or two from the direction of Murfreesboro, as though in angry protest against their repulse, but when this ceased there was silence all over the field, so deep by contrast with the usual uproar of battle that it seemed as though it were an oppressive and supernatural.

On Thursday morning the sun rose through a mass of thick mist and fog, and just as he made his appearance the objects of the enemy opened a brisk fire upon Palmer's Division, which constituted the right wing of Gen. Crittenden's command. A few of our men were wounded, and our pickets manifested some disposition to give way.

Two batteries, however, moved up to their support, and the cannonade was so brisk that the whole of our force rushed to arms, expecting an immediate renewal of the battle on a grand scale; but the Rebels did not seem disposed to make the fight general; they brought out a battery or two, which attempted to reply to ours, but which were silenced completely in five or six minutes from the time they commenced to fire.

Their pickets were also driven back and several prisoners taken, and the sounds of battle, except the occasional dropping of musketry, again ceased. Capt. Beady's battery, 6th Indiana, and the 5th Indiana battery, commanded by Lieut. Estep, were mainly instrumental in repulsing this attack. From this time until 11 in the afternoon there was no fighting, with the exception of occasional skirmishes between the pickets.

At the time last mentioned an attack was made upon our right, where Dan McCook's command had been mustered together after the repulse of Wednesday. His men, anxious to retaken their character, lay close behind some temporary breastworks of stone and logs, and the Rebels were within a few hundred yards of our own. Then they advanced, and the batteries retired in confusion to the cedar thickets in which they had been concealed all the morning of Thursday, leaving a number of their dead and wounded in an intervening field.

On the center of our left, where a part of Gen. Sheridan's Division was posted, a brisk firing was kept up between the pickets until nearly 9 o'clock, when the Rebels, being more advanced in the center, made considerable force into an open field. This time our men no longer remained behind their breastworks, but charged upon the enemy, and put them to a disgraceful flight, a single company of the 27th Illinois capturing 150 prisoners.

A number of shells from some of our batteries splashed the Rebels with the remainder of the evening. The fighting really settled to little more than heavy skirmishing. Both armies seemed inclined to rest after the dreadful contest of the day before, but during the night there was an ugly drizzling rain, from which our soldiers, without shelter of any kind, suffered severely.

On Friday the morning there was nothing of importance occurring Thursday night—certainly a shock from either side was heard on Friday in rising until nearly 9 o'clock, when a terrific cannonade commenced and raged for half-an-hour all along the center of our line. The enemy's shot and shell flew thick and fast upon the railroad and turnpike, and all over the open ground occupied by the center of our army.

One of our batteries was moved to the front, and had more than half the horses killed and disabled by the Rebel fire; but it soon became evident that the enemy's artillery was inferior to our own, and after Gen. Lee had been killed to pieces a Rebel battery of large brass guns, which was situated near the turnpike, directly in front of Murfreesboro, the others hastily drove off, and there was again a lull in the storm. Our loss in this artillery duel was about 100 killed and wounded.

From ten reports of Rebel prisoners, I am led to believe that they carried a loss very considerable. There was nothing more than heavy skirmishing from this until 4 o'clock p. m.

On Thursday there was little disposition manifested on either side to renew the battle, and this feeling continued until after the cannonade of Friday morning, the result of which did much to encourage and inspire our army to a more vigorous and energetic conduct than took place in the afternoon of Thursday. Gen. Van Cleve's division, belonging to Gen. Crittenden's corps, had been thrown across Stone River on Thursday, in anticipation of an assault upon our left, similar to that upon the right on

See Eighth Page.