

WAR STORIES.

Reminiscences of the Battle of Chancellorsville.

Col. C. C. Sanders, in Atlanta Journal.

General Hooker, commanding the Federal army in 1863, occupied the hills north of the Rappahannock, Va., with a force of about 125,000 thoroughly equipped and well seasoned troops. It was by far the best furnished body of soldiery at that time in the field on either side. It was commanded by "Fighting Joe Hooker," who had boasted "that while in command of the army of the west he had only been able to see the backs of the Confederate soldiers." He had been transferred to the army of the Potomac for the express purpose of taking Richmond. So sanguine was he of accomplishing this feat that he dated his general orders "Headquarters in the Saddle." General Lee's army of 59,000 veterans occupied the south bank of the river and in front of Fredericksburg. It was composed of Stonewall Jackson's and A. P. Hill's corps and McLaws' and Anderson's divisions of Longstreet's corps (Longstreet with the balance of his corps being at Suffolk, Va., some 200 miles away).

The restless Hooker, on the 1st and 2d of May, 1863, crossed the river immediately in front of the Confederate lines with a most formidable array of artillery, cavalry and best equipped infantry then in the service on either side—greater in numbers than any force General Lee had in his entire command to oppose him with. But the sequel soon proved the truth of the aphorism that "the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong." Hooker had also crossed the Rappahannock about the same time 12 miles above Fredericksburg with 75,000 men of all arms, resting each wing of his command at or near the banks of the river, and in the form of a crescent. In addition to this Hooker had sent a large body of cavalry under General Stoneman to cut off Lee's communication with Richmond. By this movement he thought he had Lee entirely surrounded and completely in his power and boastingly announced in general orders to his forces that his, "the finest body of troops on the planet," would quickly destroy Lee and his army and be in Richmond in a very short time. The writer, just at this time, witnessed one of the grandest military spectacles ever beheld in modern times. He saw drawn up along the shores and adjacent plains of the Rappahannock River line after line of light and heavy artillery, with intervals between them; each line formed in regular order of battle and each supported by a full army corps and divisions of infantry and cavalry, extending almost as far back as the eye could reach. All these dazzling lines of armed men fairly glittering in blue and gold, with their polished guns, flashing sabers and brilliantly colored standards, formed a picture of military splendor, when taken in connection with their vast numbers—all in full view of the comparatively small and poorly equipped forces of the Confederates, certainly seemed sufficient to appal the hearts of any but the brave, courageous and intensely patriotic soldiers who, relying on the justice of their cause, had resolved not to be intimidated by numbers or dismayed by all this magnificent display of martial grandeur. But as gloomy as the prospect was to the Southern troops, that wonderful military genius, the indomitable, daring, resourceful strategist and leader, "Stonewall" Jackson, was there and showed himself equal to the emergency.

Late at night he resolved to make a personal inspection of the country roads and other approaches leading toward Hooker's rear near Chancellorsville. Disguising himself he silently left camp about midnight. He had not gone far before he came upon a solitary Confederate soldier, squatting over a little fire, trying to cook tender a small piece of poor and very tough beef, his only ration. After conversing a short while with this lone ration cooker, he found him to be an intelligent and well informed man, one born and raised in the immediate neighborhood and thoroughly acquainted with every road and by-path in all that section. After fully assuring himself of this man's reliability and fitness as a guide he made himself known and, securing the consent of the soldier's captain, took him with him, and soon by his guidance had examined the ground in Hooker's rear. Jackson returned to his troops and soon had them in motion in the direction of Richmond. This was only a feint, however, and induced the Federals to think that he (Jackson) was either unwilling to meet them in battle or had gone to look after Stoneman, who was endeavoring to cut off Lee's supplies. In this direction, however, Jackson did not go very far before he suddenly turned

toward Hooker's rear near Chancellorsville.

With his sharpshooters and a part of Stuart's cavalry between him and the enemy, thus concealing his main forces, he succeeded in carrying his men completely around the unsuspecting Federals.

While witnessing all this the writer, though young, had had a fair military education while at school and some experience while in command of a Georgia regiment which was then on the ground with some other troops belonging to General Longstreet's corps, could not help thinking and so expressed himself to one of his superior officers that Lee outnumbered, as he was, at least two or three to one, would be compelled to fall back. But this did not prove to be so, as the ubiquitous "Stonewall" was soon pouring heavy volleys from his artillery and infantry into the flanks and rear of Hooker's thoroughly surprised and soon to be demoralized and routed legions. Taking advantage of Hooker's surprise Jackson rushed forward with the velocity of a meteor and the fury of a thunderstorm and pushed Hooker and his powerful army back until nightfall, when his victorious troops fell down from sheer exhaustion and bivouacked on the field, surrounded on all sides by the wounded and slain of both armies.

After having again reconnoitred the ground and given his exhausted troops a few hours' rest, Jackson concluded to renew his attack that night. It was while returning from this last reconnoissance that he and the members of his staff were mistaken by his own men for a group of Federal cavalry and fired upon. As a result of this disastrous mistake Jackson received the wound from which he died a few days later. Just before his death, and while delirious, he uttered those notable and ever memorable words: "Let us pass over the river and rest under the shade of the trees."

About 10 o'clock that night the writer sat down with his back against a tree in the midst of his regiment, which was still in line of battle, and while endeavoring to snatch a few moments' sleep he was suddenly aroused by the firing of musketry and artillery which seemed to proceed from a point just beyond the enemy's lines. This firing proved to be by a detachment of our own troops that had silently reached Hooker's rear. It was these unfortunate shots that killed Stonewall Jackson, the right hand of Lee, one of the greatest generals of the Confederacy.

The writer would here beg the indulgence of those who may ever take the time and trouble to peruse this hastily written and rather disconnected narrative of the battle of Chancellorsville and some of the heroic incidents directly connected therewith, to say that he had the honor on several occasions to post his regiment immediately around the great Stonewall Jackson at night and guard him while he sought a few hours' repose. This sleep was usually taken just before day and at a different place, though always within easy reach should his plans require speedy execution. He was invariably out of his ambulance, in which he usually slept, and in his saddle by daybreak. He was constantly moving. So it was exceedingly difficult for the enemy and even his own troops to locate him.

This feint was regarded as necessary for the Federals, as was well known by us all, were always anxious to know Jackson's whereabouts in order to evade, if possible, the sudden and generally irresistible onslaught he so often planned and rapidly executed, to their great discomfiture.

Jackson being disabled, as before stated, his corps was placed under command of that indomitable, dashing cavalry general, J. E. B. Stuart, who, under the eye of Lee, forced Hooker back across the Rappahannock River, while A. P. Hill's corps and McLaws' division forced General Sedgewick, with his many army corps, who were moving in the direction of Chancellorsville, in the rear of Lee, across the same river at Bank's ford. At this juncture the fate of our army seemed to hang upon a mere thread—the slightest error or mistake, though only of a feather's weight, might have turned the scale against us. The supreme moment had arrived. Sedgewick must be crushed, for he was already pressing Lee's rear and was aiming to unite with Hooker, which might prove disastrous. But Lee, like the great and unequal commander that he was, proved equal to the occasion. He had left General Gordon with several brigades at Hamilton's crossing to guard in the direction of Richmond. Gordon moved in echelon, that is, one brigade behind

another at greater or less distance apart, forming a somewhat lengthened line of battle, each brigade ready by a rapid movement to support one another in case of either one meeting too strong resistance. He in this way struck Sedgewick's left flank and rear like a tornado and poured such a torrent of shot and shell, grape and canister into his strongly massed legions as had seldom or never been seen before on any field of battle, while Lee in person, with McLaws' division and such other troops as he had at hand, moved quickly in Sedgewick's front at Salem Church, piercing his center. As his (Sedgewick's) left and rear had already suffered severely from Gordon's well planned and well executed attack, his entire force was defeated and put to flight and compelled to cross the Rappahannock after midnight. This splendid echelon movement made by Gordon, which proved so successful, seemed to have come to him by intuition. He was a born soldier and did not realize at the time that he was but repeating a movement that Joshua, Hannibal, Charlemagne and other eminent commanders had used ages before. Of all the brilliant victories achieved by General Gordon this one will be studied and admired by students of military science for coming generations. Certainly to Lee, Gordon and all the officers and private soldiers of the Army of Northern Virginia belong glory, honor and fame, which will go sounding down the ages with increasing splendor and brilliance, and will inspire the youth of coming generations with patriotism, true courage and every ennobling virtue that goes to make up the very highest ideals of perfect, self-sacrificing manhood and devotion to duty.

With no desire to criticize or in the least to depreciate the chivalric valor or magnificent courage and heroism of the gallant troops of other Southern States, nor to underestimate the valor of our opponents, the writer, as a Georgian and commander of a Georgia regiment, hopes that he will not be taxed with exaggeration, or as claiming undue credit for the troops of his native State, when he says they covered themselves with glory in the bloody conflict they took so conspicuously a part in and around Chancellorsville, Virginia, on the third and fourth of May, 1863. The Georgia troops who took prominent parts in the several engagements were those of Phillips' and Cobb's legions and the Sixteenth, Eighteenth and Twenty-fourth Georgia regiments, the latter regiment the writer had the honor of commanding. These brave sons of noble old Georgia did their duty well and unflinchingly, losing heavily both of officers and of men. Hundreds upon hundreds of these brave boys are now filling unmarked graves and long neglected trenches in and around Chancellorsville and along the banks of the Rappahannock. These silent homes of honor and neglected abodes of patriots still speak not only to Georgians, but to the entire world and we who lie here died in vindication of a righteous cause; a cause though it failed, left not a stain on the unsullied escutcheon of our State or one foul blot on a single page of her history. No dishonorable act of ours in this contest should cause a blush to mantle the cheek of any honest, true-hearted Southern man.

Old Salem Church, around whose hallowed portals were enacted so many deeds of heroic valor and awful scenes of desperate conflicts, will long be remembered by every one who witnessed them. Scarcely ever before in the history of ancient or modern warfare was so horrible a spectacle of death and carnage presented to human sight. This venerable old edifice, that had so long been consecrated to God and so long used for His service by the followers of the Prince of Peace, standing, as it did, midway between Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, was the very center of one of the most destructive battles of the war between the States. Here hundreds upon hundreds of the wounded of both armies were gathered up and brought for surgical attention—the building being used as a field hospital. The scenes of death and carnage witnessed here no human tongue or pen can adequately describe. Even the stoutest hearts of those who had been long inured to scenes of blood and suffering, stood pale and speechless and trembling as they beheld these heartrending sights.

After the house was filled the spacious churchyard was literally covered with wounded and dying. The sight inside of the building, for horror, was, perhaps never equaled within so limited a space, every available foot of space was crowded with wounded and bleeding soldiers. The floor, the benches even the chancel and pulpit were all packed almost to suffocation with them.

The amputated limbs were piled up in every corner almost as high as a man could reach; blood flowed in streams along the aisles and out at the doors; screams and groans were heard on all sides, while the surgeons with their assistants, worked with knives, saws, sutures and bandages to relieve or save all they could from bleeding to death. These heartrending horrors are now, after nearly forty years has elapsed, as vivid in the memory of the

writer, and probably in the memories of many others who witnessed them as though they had occurred but on yesterday.

This venerable old edifice was badly wrecked during the battle, but in consideration of the fact that the wounded Federals received just as tender and careful treatment at the hands of our surgeons and their assistants as the Confederates did, caused some generous citizens of the North soon after the war closed, to show their appreciation of the kindness shown their suffering soldiers, had the house rebuilt in a very handsome manner. So old Salem Church stands to-day one of the most beautiful houses of worship in all that part of the country, and a noted landmark of one of the bloodiest battles of the late civil war.

In conclusion, I will state that seldom so overwhelming a victory was ever gained over such fearful odds as General Lee's over General Hooker at Chancellorsville. By it, Richmond was saved and the Federal army, one of the largest and best appointed that had ever been encountered by our troops up to that time, was thoroughly beaten and forced to save itself from almost utter extermination by ignominious retreat. According to statistics taken from Hooker's and Lee's reports, now on record at Washington and recently published, is taken the following figures. Hooker had in the action 113,833 troops, 404 pieces of artillery, besides small arms, and lost 17,287 men, while Lee had only 59,631 troops, 160 cannon, besides small arms, and lost 12,000 men. These figures clearly show the military genius, skill and ability of General Lee and his subordinate officers as well as the pure metal of which the Confederate soldier, from the highest officer to the humblest man in the ranks was composed.

Knew all About it.

Rear Admiral William Kirkland was affectionately known in the navy as "Red Bill."

A young ensign hesitatingly found his way into the admiral's cabin one day, and with a great deal of circumlocution and coughing finally let it be known that he loved the admiral's daughter, and would be the happiest man on earth if he had her parent's consent to marry her.

"No, sir!" thundered the admiral. "No, sir! Not now, anyhow. No pauper of an ensign is going to marry my daughter. You'd better wait until you are promoted and are able to support yourself before you think of marrying."

The young officer astounded the admiral by not retiring precipitately. He even ventured the reminder that the admiral himself had married when he was but an ensign, and that his married life had been a happy one.

"Red Bill" Kirkland glared at the presumptuous speaker for a moment and then thundered:

"I know I married when I was an ensign. My father-in-law supported me for several years, too, but I'll be hanged if yours will!"—New York Times.

—A man can earn money faster than a woman can, but she can spend it faster than he can earn it.

—It isn't always easy to tell how much you don't love one woman till you meet another that you do love.

Getting the Old Man's Consent.

"It was settled sometime ago that he was to marry my daughter," said the father of a girl of the period, "but it yet remained for the young man to get my consent. It was merely a formality, however, as I had not a figure whatever during the campaign, my girl arranging matters to suit herself without consulting me or my wishes."

"Now, I remembered with what trepidation I had approached my wife's father when I asked him for her hand, and I made up my mind that when that young man showed up to ask me for my daughter's hand I would have revenge, not only for what I had to pass through when I urged my suit, but for being shoved into the back ground during the present proceedings."

"Well, he called at my office yesterday, and I told my office boy to admit him and leave us alone and see that we were not disturbed."

"Just drop in," said he, easily, declining to take a seat, "to tell you that I am going to marry your daughter the middle of next month." It will be an informal affair, so you may consider yourself invited without further notice. Good day."

"Before I could catch my breath he was gone, and when I complained to my daughter about his treatment of me, all the comfort I got was that I could consider myself fortunate in getting an invitation, as it was to be an exclusive affair."—Detroit Free Press.

—Apropos of the money question, marry a man in public life or out has yet developed a scheme which will give everybody all the money he wants.

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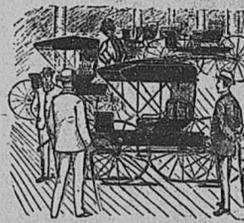
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