

Colonel Michael Shoemaker Narrative

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NARRATIVE OF COLONEL MICHAEL SHOEMAKER, OF THE PART TAKEN BY THE THIRTEENTH REGIMENT MICHIGAN VOLUNTEER INFANTRY IN THE BATTLE OF STONE [sic] RIVER, OR MURFREESBORO, IN TENNESSEE, ON THE 29TH, 30TH AND 31ST DECEMBER, 1862, AND THE 1ST, 2D AND 3D JANUARY, 1863.

On Friday, the 26th of December, 1862, the Army of the Cumberland, commanded by Gen. H. S. Rosecrans, broke up their camp near Nashville, Tennessee, and commenced moving towards Murfreesboro.

The Thirteenth regiment of Michigan volunteer infantry, of which I was in command, was part of the third brigade of the first division of the left wing, which was under the command of Maj. Gen. Thomas Crittenden, of Kentucky.

Our brigade was commanded by Col. Chas. G. Harker, of the sixty-fifth regiment Ohio volunteer infantry, and was composed of the fifty-first regiment Indiana volunteer infantry, Col. A. S. Straight; the seventy-third regiment Indiana volunteer infantry, Col. Hathaway; the sixty-fourth Ohio volunteer infantry, Col. J. Ferguson; sixty-fifth Ohio volunteer infantry, Lieut. Col. Young; my own regiment and the sixth Ohio light battery, commanded by Capt. Cullen Bradley.

Col. Harker was a graduate of West Point, a young man about twenty-six years of age. Our division moved out towards Lavergne [sic] in the rain, which continued to fall all the forenoon. The enemy were directly in our front, and there was more or less skirmishing with our advance guards during the afternoon. The confederate army, commanded by Gen. Braxton Bragg, which had retreated from Kentucky, was encamped between Nashville and Murfreesboro, and we encountered their outposts soon after leaving our camp. They resisted our advance, giving ground only as they were forced to do by the pressure in front and want of support by the main body of their army, which would, if it had been given, have brought on a general battle.

We encamped for the night near Lavergne [sic]. On the 27th we continued our advance, my regiment marching with full regimental front on the left of the road, and as the other regiments advanced on our right and left, in the same manner, the whole face of the ground was swept over. Our skirmishers, who were well in advance, were almost constantly engaged, and at Lavergne [sic] the first brigade of our division had quite a sharp fight, with a number of men killed and wounded, before they could dislodge the

confederate forces from the houses and other defenses which they occupied. There was skirmishing and fighting along our entire front all day, the enemy slowly but constantly retreating as we steadily advanced, but disputing every inch of ground.

They kept a battery in the road, which would occupy every elevation in it and fire upon us until we came dangerously near, when they would limber up and retreat to the next favorable position, where they would halt and again open fire upon our ranks. This was repeated all the day, and gave us considerable annoyance. We moved forward in this manner to Stewart's creek, where we encamped. The rain fell steadily all of the afternoon, but did not in any manner retard our progress. There was heavy firing on our right all day. We remained in camp on the creek from Saturday night until Monday morning. Sunday was a very pleasant day. The birds were out singing, so much so as not only to attract our attention, but also to afford us great pleasure, it being to us a novel experience for a day in mid-winter. I took advantage of my leisure moments and wrote to my wife, with a pencil as follows:

"STEWART'S CREEK, December 28, 1862.

MY DEAR WIFE - We have had three days of hard work, with more or less fighting every day. A few men have been killed and quite a number wounded, but none in my regiment, though we were under fire each day. Yesterday, at Lavergne [sic], we had quite a heavy skirmish, and a shell struck a short distance in front of me, but did not explode. Christmas day we were out all day for forage. We drove the confederates three miles and loaded three hundred wagons. We did not get back into camp till long after dark. Got supper and to bed about 11 P. M. The next morning the whole army commenced to advance, and we are now within eight miles of Murfreesboro. The enemy contest every foot of ground, and we expect a strong opposition when we attempt to cross Stewart's creek, on which we are now resting. Friday and Saturday were very unpleasant - we had rain half of each day. This is a very pleasant Sunday morning. It is now 10 A. M., and you, I suppose, are preparing to go to church. We shall undoubtedly go on to Murfreesboro and may have a big fight. * * * I doubt if we shall have anything like a battle until we pass that point. I wrote a long letter on the 24th. I have received none since the 23d. I suppose communication will now be very irregular. There is a report that the rebels have possession of the railroad at Cave City. If so it will interrupt the mails. When I learned we were to advance I made no application for leave, as I would not be away from my regiment at such a time. We are all sitting around a camp fire awaiting orders. We have but three wagons to a regiment, and our accommodations are of course limited, yet we all enjoy it, with all its discomforts and hardships. It is early up and late out now every day, and frequently after being out all day we have to do picket duty all night. We took quite a number of prisoners yesterday.

They say we will have a battle at Murfreesboro, but I don't believe it. Lieut. Col. Worden is not with us. * * * Kiss the children for me.

Affectionately your husband,

M. SHOEMAKER.

Our skirmishers crossed Stewart's creek on Sunday afternoon and captured a wagon load of muskets and sabres [sic].

THE FIRST DAY OF THE BATTLE.

Monday morning, December 29th, 1862, broke bright and pleasant, the birds singing as though all the world was at peace, and as happy as they.

Our army resumed its march and we advanced to Stone [sic] river under a continuous fire from the confederates. Our brigade struck the river at the ford, just below Murfreesboro, where it bends to the east, and on the east side of the railroad. About sun-set we were ordered to cross the river and force our way into Murfreesboro. My regiment was on the left and in the advance, with company "A," Lieut. VanArsdale, and company "I," Lieut. Slayton, thrown forward as skirmishers under command of Major Culver. The confederate troops occupied the opposite bank, and as we entered the river we were received with a perfect shower of balls, which did us no damage, as they all passed over our heads, but they kept up a disagreeable pattering in the leaves and branches under which we were advancing. The ground occupied by the enemy was much higher than the river, and this probably was the cause of their shooting so wide of their mark. They retired as we advanced, and we continued our onward march up the bank, through the woods, until we reached a cornfield, where we halted and corrected our alignment. I found my regiment quite in advance and considerably overlapping the fifty-first Indiana. In getting my regiment into position I placed part of my men so that they could enfilade any force approaching us. The entire brigade was now ordered to lie down on their arms and await further orders. It was now quite dark, and evident that the confederates were in front in force but not in battle array. I could distinctly hear their officers giving the words of command, and that apparently in hot haste, for the purpose of securing a proper formation to resist our attack.

I have always been of the opinion that, if our advance had not been stopped by order of our own superior officers, we would have surprised the enemy before they could have formed their ranks, and would have driven them from their position, which would have left Murfreesboro open to us without further fighting or opposition of any kind. The

confederates would then have retreated to the Tennessee river without giving us battle; but as it had to be fought, perhaps the ground was as favorable for us here as it would have been elsewhere. The confederates evidently were not expecting us to cross Stone [sic] river so late in the day, and were not, in my opinion, prepared to offer an effectual resistance to our advance had it continued directly upon them after reaching the cornfield in which we halted.

While our forces were lying in the corn-field, and between 9 and 10 o'clock P. M., the enemy, who had now got into line, poured volley after volley into what they supposed to be our position. They were correct in locating my regiment, and had not my men been lying down our loss would have been quite large, for the bullets rattled among the cornstalks above our heads like hail-stones. As it was we had but two casualties; one boy was wounded within a few feet of myself, and Walter DeLong, orderly sergeant of company "F," who was in advance with the skirmish line, was killed. Thus the first man wounded and the first killed in the battle of Stone [sic] river, or Murfreesboro, belonged to the Thirteenth Michigan.

About 11 P. M. we were ordered to recross the river, which we did as silently as possible, and my regiment bivouacked in the open field on the rising ground near the river. I was very much fatigued, having been on the move since three o'clock in the morning. Randall, my attendant, took my saddle from my horse, placed it on the ground as a pillow, with a thin rubber blanket for a mattress, and on it I stretched myself, with my cap on my head, booted and spurred, my sword buckled to my side - in fact, I lay down accoutered as I had been throughout the day. My head was hardly on the saddle before I was sound asleep, although the crack of the musket could still be heard quite frequently. Adjutant Culver said to me the next morning, "Colonel, your head was not fairly on the saddle before you commenced snoring, and you snored so loudly that I could not get to sleep for an hour." I want it understood that ordinarily I do not snore at all, but at this time owing to extraordinary fatigue I had undergone, I undoubtedly made some lively music of that kind.

THE SECOND DAY.

The morning of the 30th of December was quite bleak and cold. It was ushered in with sharp skirmishing; the confederates again occupying the ground on the opposite side of the river, from which we had driven them the night before. Our brigade did not change its position during the day, and some of my men built several impromptu wind-brakes or shields, with rails and corn-stalks, to protect them from the strong, cold and piercing wind which prevailed all day. This was done on our left and over a rise of ground which protected them from the fire of the enemy, as they could not be seen by any of them

within musket shot, though even there the whiz of the bullets as they flew over their heads would be heard every few moments. No fires were allowed, and the situation at best was uncomfortable. At night we again slept on the ground, the "starry decked heavens" our only covering, except a few army blankets, but these latter proved a very welcome addition.

I have never been able to understand why Gen. Rosecrans allowed, as he did, his army to remain inactive all this day, the 30th. Had he followed up his plan of attack as commenced on Monday (the 29th), the advantage of an offensive movement would all have been on our side. By the delay he enabled the confederates to concentrate in overwhelming numbers on his right wing, which taken by surprise on Wednesday morning, was overpowered and lost largely in guns and prisoners, besides endangering his whole army.

THE EVENTFUL THIRD DAY.

On the morning of Wednesday, the 31st of December, we were ordered to cross the river again, while other troops of the left wing were to do the same at a ford lower down the river.

In the meanwhile, from earliest dawn, the incessant booming of cannon and rattling of musketry in the distance on the right made it apparent that a desperate battle was being fought in that part of the field, and before we had made any movement we learned that it was resulting in disaster and defeat to the right wing of our army, composed of the divisions of Johnson, Davis and Sheridan, commanded by Gen. McCook, which had been for the most part completely surprised. The confederates having massed their forces and taken the initiative, had attacked them with the first appearance of light, and found them, particularly the divisions of Johnson and Davis, which were first struck by their advancing columns, quite unprepared to receive and check them. The horses of many of the batteries were away for water, and the guns were captured without firing a shot. The men of numbers of regiments were not in line and were captured or driven from their position and dispersed before they had time to form. The attack was so unlooked for, sudden and impetuous that the troops of the right wing that were enabled to offer resistance could not stem the torrent and were driven steadily from one line to another, many of them were taken prisoners, and a large number of cannon (twenty-eight pieces) were captured by the confederates.

Gen. Rosecrans, in his official report, says: "Soon after a second officer from Gen. McCook arrived and stated that the right wing was being driven, a fact but too manifest by the rapid movement of the noise of battle toward the north."

Again he says: "At this moment fugitives and stragglers from McCook's corps began to make their appearance through the cane-brakes in such numbers that I became satisfied McCook's corps was routed. I therefore directed Gen. Crittenden to send Vancleve [sic] to the right of Rosseau, Wood to lead Col. Harker's brigade further down the Murfreesboro pike, to go in and attack the enemy on the right of Vancleve [sic], the Pioneer brigade meanwhile occupying the knoll of ground in the rear of Palmer's center, supporting Stoke's battery."

Gen. Wood did not lead Harker's brigade, but remained with the rest of his division, in the left wing, with Gen. Crittenden, where, sometime during the day, he was slightly wounded in the foot, and went to Nashville, where he remained until after the confederates retreated from Murfreesboro.

The fortunes of the day were so far decidedly against us. In the meantime Gen. Rosecrans had formed a new line of battle with the center and left wing of his army, in part facing west, and at right angles with his former one, and when the retreating but stubbornly fighting portion of the right wing, which still retained an organization, fell back upon it, the enemy were so warmly received that their advance was checked, and the fighting was of the most sanguinary character. The confederates, encouraged by their success in the morning and up to this time, made attack after attack, marching up to our lines on all parts of our front with a bravery that could not be surpassed, delivering their fire as they advanced, with the evident determination of breaking through them and of driving our troops from the field, but they were met with a bravery and determination equal to their own, and failed in every attempt. So terrible and deadly was the fire of both artillery and musketry with which they were received that they found it impossible to break our line of battle or force it further back, and they were compelled to retire as often as they advanced.

The fortune of the day now seemed to be more evenly balanced. All this time the confederates were sending fresh troops to reinforce their attacking columns, and Gen. Rosecrans was as constantly giving fresh support to his line where it seemed most to need it, Gen. Rosecrans himself moving rapidly from one part of the field to another, proving himself to be equal to the occasion, and justifying the love and admiration which was felt for him by his whole army.

The battle had now continued for several hours with unabated fury, but was now being fought with more equal chances for our being able to check the further advance of the confederate forces. It is but seldom if ever that an army receiving such a shock as overwhelmed our right wing can recover from it, and that our army did not suffer a most

disastrous defeat is owing to the indomitable bravery of our troops and the admirable disposition of his forces by Gen. Rosecrans when he found his right wing defeated, and most of what was left of it rushing back on his center in the greatest confusion and disorder. He made amends as far as in his power for his error in allowing the confederates to take the initiative and surprise one third of his army.

Until the new line was formed our brigade had taken no part in the conflict, but the order to cross the river had been countermanded, and we were held in readiness to be placed "where we could do the most good." Our time had now come; the confederates were out flanking our troops on the extreme right, and it became necessary to meet and check a movement which otherwise might prove fatal, as all our transportation, commissary stores and ammunition were endangered, and if they were lost all was lost.

COLONEL HARKER'S BRIGADE.

Our brigade was detached from the division of Gen. Wood and ordered to the extreme right of the army, to meet and if possible repulse the enemy, who were making an advance which, if successful, threatened to be attended with such disastrous results. In executing this movement we necessarily traversed the entire field of battle, and were witnesses of more of its incidents than any other portion of the army could possibly be. Fugitives were flying in every direction. Many regiments had become completely disorganized, a portion of them captured, and those escaping making the best of their way to any point of safety within our lines or to the rear, some with and many without their arms. Batteries of artillery were changing position and apparently moving in every direction. Baggage wagons and transportation were mixed up in the rout in extricable confusion. Dead and wounded men were lying in all parts of the field, and there was a degree of disorder pervading that gave anything but a promising appearance to the aspect of affairs. Through all this turmoil and confusion our brigade steadily pursued its way until we had left it all behind, when we were formed into line of battle and faced towards the enemy. The sixty-fourth Ohio, sixty-fifth Ohio and seventy-third Indiana infantry forming the front line with the fifty-first Indiana in the reserve; Bradley's sixth Ohio light artillery on the left flank of the advance, supported by my regiment, the thirteenth Michigan. In this order we moved west from the Murfreesboro pike, and passing directly in the rear of the log house which had been the headquarters of Gen. Rosecrans the day previous. We advanced through the first piece of woods, across an open space of cleared fields, into the woods beyond, where the sixty-fourth Ohio, sixty-fifth Ohio and seventy-third Indiana regiments became actively and hotly engaged; the battery forming in the cleared field and opening a rapid fire on the enemy. My regiment was supporting the battery, and not being in a position to take an active part in the conflict was obliged to sustain a heavy fire while in a state of inactivity, and unable to

return it. This is one of the most trying situations in which troops can be placed, but my men bore it bravely and without flinching, but were soon ordered to fall back with the battery, which, in consequence of the repulse of the other regiments of our brigade, was obliged to retreat out of the cleared field into the openings which it again formed and opened its guns on the confederates, who were advancing rapidly and in force directly in our front.

The sixty-fourth Ohio, sixty-fifth Ohio and seventy-third Indiana had struck the enemy soon after entering the woods, and after a sharp and well contested fight were defeated and obliged to retreat in disorder before the superior numbers of the confederates. They (our forces) came out of the woods, retreated across the cleared fields, followed by the fifty-first Indiana, and disappeared at some distance on our right.

THE GALLANT FIGHT OF THE THIRTEENTH MICHIGAN.

My regiment was now left alone with Bradley's battery to contend with two brigades, which had just defeated four of our regiments, any one of which mustered more men than my own. Col. Harker, our brigade commander, was with the defeated and retreating troops trying to rally them and bring them into line. No forces of ours but my own regiment were in sight, and I was the only officer on horseback on the field. We were on the left side of the battery, the ground sloping down in our front to a fence, about forty rods distant, which divided the openings from the cleared fields. The openings, or wood land, had scattered trees of small size at intervals, but not enough in numbers sufficient to obstruct observation or action. The confederates came forward on a run, charging and firing as they advanced. Capt. Bradley kept his guns working, throwing case and canister shot into their ranks as fast as his men could load and fire, but he was unable to check their advance, and having lost several men and eight horses, which were shot down at his guns, and fearing his entire battery would be captured if he should longer attempt to hold his position, he limbered up such of his cannon as he could draw with his remaining horses and left the field, leaving two guns of his battery on the ground, one of which he spiked. The fact that the men and horses lost by Capt. Bradley were killed by musket balls proves how determinedly he contested the field, and how closely he was pressed before he abandoned a part of his battery. My regiment now alone confronted the enemy, who were fairly within musket shot. I had determined not to retreat without fighting unless ordered to do so, although I knew it was expected that my regiment would leave the field with the battery which it was ordered to support, but over which I had no control. I would not only have been justified in retreating but I knew Col. Harker expected me to do so, as he had no hope that my regiment could for a moment withstand the superior force which he knew was

advancing against it, and which had already defeated all the rest of his brigade, but “the battle is not always to the strong.”

I knew that my regiment could be depended upon, and was eager for the fray. When the enemy was near enough so that every shot would tell I ordered my men to open fire upon them, which they did with the most telling effect. We had not as yet been in the fight at all, my men were excited, but fresh and cool, so that every shot told. The advance of the confederates was checked at once, and they retreated to the fence between the woods and the open fields, which they lined with their men and which became at once a line of fire blazing at my little regiment. We returned it with such precision and effect as to hold them there, but unfortunately our line was much shorter than theirs, they outnumbering us probably ten to one, consequently the overlapping line did not come under our fire, and continued cautiously and slowly to advance, so that after we had been fighting about thirty minutes it was reported to me that the enemy was coming upon and about to turn our right flank. As there was no appearance of support for us I ordered the regiment to retire, which was done in good order. Fortunately for us, there was a cedar thicket just in our rear, after passing through which I halted and formed my regiment facing the confederates, who were halting on the line we occupied during the fight, and showing signs of hesitation about a further advance. While forming my regiment I was joined by Col. Harker, who asked me to try and hold my position until he could bring me support, leaving immediately in order to do so. As the enemy had evidently halted and were not following up their advantage I determined to attack them, and I now ordered my regiment to advance, charge and regain the position we had lost. The blood of my men was now up, every man moved forward with a will and as if actuated by a common impulse. As we advanced every man, officers and men, shouted and yelled to the top of their bent, and as if confident of success. As we emerged from the thicket our men poured a volley of musketry into the ranks of the confederates, who were engaged in examining our dead and wounded, and in breaking the muskets lying by them on the ground. The enemy were evidently taken by surprise by our bold and unexpected movement, and stunned and confused by the fire of our men delivered almost in their faces, they believing that they had fallen into an ambuscade, scattered and fled without offering the least resistance, many of them throwing away their arms, some hiding among the rocks or behind trees, and others turning and firing upon us as they ran. We gave them no time to recover from their panic, but pursued them, yelling and shouting so that they might think us thousands instead of hundreds, driving them down out of the woods, across the cleared fields, and into the woods beyond. Their whole line was equally affected by the panic, and all fled together, as well on our flanks as in our front.

We captured sixty-eight prisoners, and recaptured the two pieces of cannon lost by Capt. Bradley's battery. As our men approached these guns there was a strife as to who should first reach them. Julius Lillie was then the orderly sergeant of company "E," a tall, strong young man, a good officer and one of the bravest soldiers of the army. His length of legs and fleetness of foot enabled him to outstrip all his comrades, and as he reached the gun he slapped it with his hand. At that moment a musket ball fired by one of the retreating confederates struck him in the side just below the ribs, and the space between its entrance and exit was about eight or nine inches. It did not, however, penetrate his bowels. Notwithstanding the wound the sergeant refused to quit the field, and although I sent him to the hospital every night, he rejoined his regiment every morning, doing duty through the day, and this he continued to do until Sunday, when the enemy had retreated from Murfreesboro and the fighting was at an end. As I was reforming my regiment I saw the fifty-first Illinois volunteer infantry advancing in line in rear of our left flank, but they did not in the least participate in charge or fight, or in any manner aid in the rout of the confederates. It was all accomplished before that regiment came up, and the official report shows that when it did come it halted some rods short of the ground which we occupied during the fight, and which was the most advanced position of the confederate forces when my regiment charged them. I think there was not a gun fired from their ranks, but their skirmishers picked up some prisoners who were hiding among the rocks and trees. The credit of this victory, (for such it was), belongs entirely and exclusively to the thirteenth regiment of Michigan volunteer infantry, and its importance cannot be overestimated.

When we made our fight my regiment was the only organized force (for the fifty-first Illinois were not yet in position) between the advancing confederates and the Murfreesboro pike, the railroad and the river, and right here in the rear of our army and between it and Nashville, entirely exposed, lay all our commissary and ordnance stores, our transportation trains and hospitals, which would immediately have been cut off and captured but for the success of the thirteenth Michigan in this fight, and worse than this, the flank of Gen. Rosecrans' army would have been so completely turned that to have saved his army, much more the day, would have been almost an impossibility.

THE FRUITS OF THE VICTORY.

I have always claimed that this repulse of the confederate forces by my regiment was the turning point of this day's fight, and therefore of the battle of Stone [sic] river or Murfreesboro. The enemy had in other parts of the field failed to carry positions they had attacked, but were returning again and again to the charge, while this was the first and only instance where a position they had once carried was taken from them. The

advantage we gained at this point was never lost; we held the ground we had won, and that night bivouacked on the spot where we had fought the confederates.

To show the fierceness of the combat, the close proximity of the opposing forces, and the deadliness of the fire, I have only to state that my regiment had in killed and wounded over one-third of its entire number (the exact percentage of casualties in my regiment in this action was 35 71-100 per cent.), and this in a fight which did not in time exceed thirty minutes, but during this time the pattering of the bullets was like a storm of hail, and of the few scattering trees in front and rear of our line, none of which exceeded in diameter the body of an ordinary sized man, there were none in which twenty bullets could not be found in a space of ten feet from the ground. This is not mere assertion, but the result of actual observation, and the wonder is, not that so many were killed and wounded, but that any escaped. The trees, however, intercepted all the bullets they received. While the enemy occupied the fence in our front it actually appeared like a wall of fire. It was thickly lined with men, but so dense was the smoke that nothing could be seen but the flash of their muskets, and at this was the fire of my men directed.

After this was over all the fighting in this part of the field was mere skirmishing, in which I do not know that a man was killed. During the battle I was on horseback, the only officer on the field who was mounted, and yet neither myself or horse were touched, though the bridle was cut off just above the bits, so that they fell out of the mouth of the horse. Fortunately he was very steady, a gray belonging to Lieut. Jas. R. Slayton, and had on a halter with which I guided him until the regiment was reformed, when I had it fixed so that I could use it. I attribute my escape to the formation of the ground, as it ascended from the fence, and we must have been thirty or forty feet higher than the confederates, and to the smoke which prevented them from seeing anything but the line of fire made by the flash of our muskets, which were on lower ground somewhat than that I occupied. At the close of the day I found myself so hoarse from shouting during the fight that I could hardly speak above a whisper.

OFFICIAL REPORTS.

In his report after the battle, speaking of the action of the 31st of December, Capt. Cullen Bradley, commanding sixth Ohio light battery, says:

“I retired my battery and took up a position five hundred yards in the rear and again opened on the enemy with case and canister, who were advancing in force. After an engagement of five minutes I was compelled to retire my battery, and to abandon two pieces of the battery, one of which I had spiked (since removed), and sustaining a loss of one man killed, two wounded and one man missing; also eight horses killed and three

wounded. About this time Col. Shoemaker charged the enemy with the thirteenth Michigan, driving them off the field and recovering the guns, and for which Col. Shoemaker should receive full credit.”

Signed,

“CULLEN BRADLEY,
Commanding Sixth Ohio Light Battery.”

Captain Bradley was in a position to know the merit of our achievement better than any other officer, and aside from the casualties of my own regiment, the fact that with a battery of six guns loading and firing as rapidly as possible with case and canister he was only able to maintain his position five minutes, and then obliged to retire with a loss of two guns, with eight horses killed and three wounded proves the fury and force of the attack which my regiment not only checked but repelled. There was no better or braver officer than Capt. Bradley and no better served battery, and such was their reputation in the army. Capt. Bradley was highly elated over the recovery of his guns, and from that time forth could not say enough in praise of the thirteenth Michigan and of the steady and determined valor of its officers and men. He said he always wanted them as the support of his battery. Col. Harker, who commanded the brigade, in his official report says:

“The thirteenth Michigan from this position fired upon the enemy with telling effect, and having caused their ranks to waver, followed up his advantage, supported by the fifty-first Illinois, which had come to our relief. They completely routed the enemy. The thirteenth Michigan retook the two pieces of artillery abandoned by our battery and captured sixty-eight prisoners.

“For this act of gallantry Col. Shoemaker and his gallant regiment are deserving much praise. The enemy thus driven from our right did not again attempt to annoy us from that quarter.”

Thus terminated the action of our brigade and my regiment in that part of the battle of Stone [sic] river or Murfreesboro, which was fought on Wednesday, the 31st day of December, 1862, and as our engagement took place late in the afternoon there was but little fighting after our own. There was an attempted advance of our cavalry on our right, but it did not result in an engagement at close quarters. We bivouacked on the ground we had recovered.

REFLECTIONS AND NIGHT.

The day closed with brighter prospects than it had opened; for while up to or near noon all had been loss and disaster for us, we were now everywhere holding the enemy in check, and in our fight we had repulsed them most decidedly. Although the fortunes of the day had on the whole been strongly against our army, yet there was no despondency in our ranks, or apparent among our superior officers; on the contrary all were cheerful and confident of ultimate success. Gen. Rosecrans, who I saw frequently during the day, was perfectly cool and collected, and seemed to feel equal to the emergency, exposing himself to the fire of the enemy without any apparent thought of danger. Col. Garascha, his chief of staff, was killed while riding at his side, his head having been taken off with a cannon ball. Lieut. Kirby, another of his staff, was also wounded and lost a limb.

In fact, no officer or man could be on any part of the field without being constantly under a fire more or less severe. Now it was the roar of artillery and the flying of cannon balls, now the shriek of the passing or the roar of the bursting shell; now the rattling discharge of musketry and whizzing of bullets; and if not these, it was the whir of the ball from the rifles of the sharp-shooters who were in tops of the trees, and often so far distant as to be not only unseen but the report of the guns unheard. Once during the day, while at the head of my regiment, as we were standing at rest near the edge of the woods just previous to our advance, several bullets struck near me, and it was so evident that the sharp-shooters were making a mark of me, being on horseback, that several of my officers and men called to me, "Colonel, the sharp-shooters are firing at you." I changed my position, but I could not see the sharp-shooters, nor hear the report of their rifles, nor could any of my officers. After the battle a number of guns belonging to this corps of sharp-shooters were found. They were the finest and heaviest guns of the kind that I ever saw. There were, during the week, many casualties resulting from their use in the hands of the experienced marksmen in the confederate ranks. After night set in the rain began to fall, and continued to do so in a greater or less degree until morning.

INCIDENTS OF THE NIGHT.

Soon after we had made ourselves as comfortable as we could under the circumstances, having no tents or shelter to protect ourselves from the falling rain, and but few blankets to keep us warm, I received an order to get my regiment in marching order and hold them in readiness to march with the brigade to rejoin the division of which it was a part in the left wing of the army. We were on the extreme right of the army, and in crossing the field to regain our position we necessarily had to pass over the ground occupied by the right wing, the center and part of the left wing of our army.

We found them all in motion and became aware that Gen. Rosecrans was disposing his forces for the morrow's fight. Regiments, brigades and divisions were constantly passing and repassing, apparently crossing the track of each other in every direction, and many of the scenes of that night are vividly impressed on my memory.

In the first brigade of our division was the one hundredth regiment Illinois volunteer infantry, in which Rodney Stevens Bowen, the only child of my eldest sister, was serving as captain. Having been in a distant part of the field during the entire day, I was very anxious to know how it had fared with him. I knew his brigade had been in the fight, and feared he might have been wounded, if not killed. In changing position we were finally halted quite near his regiment, and to my great satisfaction I found him unhurt. At no time during the battle were my feelings so much excited as when I met him. After exchanging congratulations we made mutual inquiries as to the part our respective regiments had taken in the battle, and who of our mutual friends had been hurt. His regiment had lost a number of men, and I learned with regret that Lieut. Mitchell, of Capt. Bowen's company, was severely wounded, and I will add that he died of his wound soon after. I had known the father of Lieut. Mitchell many years before at Wilmington, Illinois, and was grieved to hear that the lieutenant was so badly injured, but our minds were so taken up with the work before us that we had not much thought for anything else.

The incidents of the night were not all sad; some were amusing and some provoking. Among the former was a little transaction connected with Capt. Bowen and his mess. After we met them, and when we had chatted some time, I said to them that neither myself, my officers or men had had anything to eat since Wednesday morning, except what we happened to have in our pockets - it was now past midnight - that having been away from our division, we had also been away from our supplies, and as a consequence were in a ravenous condition. Capt. Bowen said their mess had some provisions, and that he would divide with me. He immediately sent for them and gave me a good share, which we (myself and officers) soon dispatched without standing very much upon the order in which it was done. In the meanwhile the provisions which he had retained for the future wants of his mess had been placed near us, and presently one of the officers discovered that they had disappeared. Immediate search was made, and to my mortification they were found in the possession of my orderly (Townley), who with his mates had about finished them, and were eating with great evident relish and enjoyment.

This gave Capt. Bowen and his brother officers an opportunity for a hearty laugh at the expense of my regiment and its reputation, which was good for procuring and keeping supplies in its mess chests. It had always been said in the division, when we were on

short rations, which was only too often, that the thirteenth were never out of supplies, and I am not only willing to admit, but take pride in the fact, that my regiment had an admirable good faculty of taking care of itself, but when we were given one-half, it was going rather too far to appropriate the other, the circumstances, however, made the offense a slight one, and it was looked upon as rather a good joke than otherwise.

A more provoking incident occurred later in the night. As we were marching and countermarching we were finally halted near the front, and remained some time in that position. I wrapped my blankets around me, and with my staff officers lay down under a tree to try and get some rest; but I was so damp and chilly that I could not do so, and found myself getting very numb and stiff. I had not been near a fire since leaving Stewart's creek, and was very cold. Seeing a fire at a distance in the rear I said to some of the officers that I would go to it, and try to get warm, and requested them, if there was any movement of our troops to notify me. I left my blankets on the ground and went to the fire. Very soon thereafter all who had been lying near me came straggling, one after another, to the fire, but each with his blanket around him. I soon returned to my resting place and found my blankets gone. Some regiment in marching had passed near the spot, and acting on the rule which mostly governed in the army, of taking what you wanted if you could find it, had appropriated my blankets. I was vexed and sorely annoyed, for the loss was one that could not be replaced while the army was engaged in actual hostilities, and I reprovved my officers for leaving them so carelessly. Fortunately I had on at the time a heavy, rough overcoat, so that I did not suffer as much from the cold and rain as I otherwise would have done. We attained finally, before daylight, as did the entire army, the position we were to occupy at the opening of the battle on the next day, and were allowed to get what rest and refreshment we could, but our condition was such that the amount of either at our command was of the most limited kind. Thus passed the night of December 31st, 1862, and January 1st, 1863. It was truly a watch night, and we saw the old year out and the new year in under circumstances such as to deeply impress on our memories its manifold and various incidents.

THE FOURTH DAY.

Thursday, January 1st, 1863. - On the morning of New Year's day, instead of making social calls on our friends at home, ours was a call to battle on the banks of the Stone [sic] river, opposite Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Our army was in order for the fight, and responded to that call in a manner reflecting the highest degree of credit upon it for courage, for discipline, for endurance, for self-reliance, and all the qualities which go to make up a good army; but if it as a whole is entitled to this credit, still greater praise is due to our gallant commander, Gen. Rosecrans, for the skillful manner in which on this eventful morning he handled his army. After the events of Wednesday, it was to the

masterly tactics of Gen. Rosecrans, more than to all other things combined, that our ultimate success was due, and for this he has never had the credit he so richly deserves. It was the position in which he placed his army on the morning of the first of January, and the results which followed from his tactics at that time, which finally decided the battle in our favor, and it has been always been a source of wonder to me that no more notice has been taken of this fact in the official report, or by those who have written of this battle.

When the fight closed on the night of Tuesday, Dec. 31st, our army was facing westward, with the left resting on or near the river at the first ford below Murfreesboro, and extending northerly nearly parallel with and crossing the railroad and stone pike, to or near the hospitals, where the transportation was parked.

During the night the left wing was swung back and formed, with the centre [sic], a line facing south, crossing the railroad at right angles, and situated on rising ground, with the force of artillery of both sections, said to be one hundred guns, in front, but masked so far as it was possible for it to be. This movement caused our army to vacate most of the ground which, on this line, had been so stubbornly and successfully held by the left wing and part of the centre [sic] on the previous day.

Our battery was immediately in front of and supported by our brigade, and was stationed just east of the Nashville pike and between it and the Nashville and Chattanooga railroad.

On New Year's morning the first call was made by the confederates, who came out of the woods to the right of our front, and finding the ground abandoned which they had fought so bravely but so ineffectually to win on the previous day, they evidently thought we had abandoned the field and were retreating towards Nashville. On they came, regiment after regiment, brigade after brigade, and division after division came marching on to the ground our forces had vacated, all shouting and cheering as they advanced so as plainly to be heard as well as seen by us. This continued until the plain was filled with their troops, all exulting in the belief that our army was in full retreat. Their exultation was of short duration, for when their forces were fairly uncovered, and were in the most exposed situation possible for them to be, our artillery, along the whole line, at a given signal, opened fire upon them as one gun. The effect was terrible and almost instantaneous. The cheering and shouting was at once changed to shrieking and groaning, and the interval was very short between the opening of our fire and the time when this whole splendid and exulting array of troops were rushing and surging, a disorganized mass, fleeing into the woods in their rear for protection from the sweeping and terrible shower of shells and balls which was mowing down their ranks. Most of them apparently ran for their lives, without any regard to their military organization, and all of them rapidly availed themselves of the welcome protection of the woods from which they had marched forth but a short time before so confidently, and, in their own minds, with victory securely within their grasp.

This all occurred under my own eyes; I saw and heard it, and nothing I have ever seen or heard before or since will at all compare with it in any respect. I never saw a finer sight than that presented by the confederate forces as they marched, making the welkin ring as they came into the fields in our front, or a grander one than when our whole line of artillery opened fire upon them, nor one more exciting than when surprised and struck with sudden fear and astonishment "at the reception they had met with," they broke and ran howling back into the woods. This was the manner in which we received their New Year's call, and this was the last of the fighting for the day. There was more or less skirmishing, and a continuous whistling of bullets from the rifles of sharpshooters, but aside from this the day passed in quietness, though not in peace.

GEN. ROSECRANS.

It was this display of generalship in organizing and arranging his forces during the night, and the resulting very decided repulse of the enemy in the morning which, coming as it did under my personal observation, more than all else caused me to admire Gen. Rosecrans, and to believe that he had greater ability as a military commander than most of the officers who have commanded our armies, and more than he now has credit for having had.

I have never seen any particular mention of these maneuvers, and of the splendid results arising from them, and have often wondered to myself why they had received no greater attention; but, if the truth must be told, I have never read any account of the battle that would be recognized as describing it, by any officer who took part in it, if he did not know to what it referred, and from this criticism I will not exempt the official report of Gen. Rosecrans. He is, in my opinion, much better qualified to command an army than to write its history.

If a true history of any of our battles is ever written, it can only be after the writer shall have examined and consulted the reports of commanders of regiments, brigades and divisions, but more particularly the first named. The reports of regimental commanders give the detail; they state where was success or defeat; what were the casualties, and give particulars which can be found nowhere else, and from which an intelligent and true account of the battle can be compiled. They not only give all the details, but they must also almost invariably state the precise facts, for they are reporting to their superior officers, where falsehood can at once be detected and where it will not be allowed. With the advance in rank there is less accurate knowledge of the facts, and usually, I am satisfied, there is more latitude in the statement of them, made to effect some personal end, or the advancement of some favorite, or of one's self.

NIGHT OF JANUARY 1ST, 1863.

In the evening our battery and others were advanced in front of our lines, our own being placed in front of a small clump of trees, just west of the railroad, and my regiment moved from its position in rear of our battery to one directly in its front, so as to prevent

the guns being taken in the night by surprise. Our outposts and pickets were thrown forward and every precaution taken to insure [sic] that my command would be ready for action at a moment's notice, after which we lay down on our arms to get what rest we could. Some of my men found a large piece of canvass [sic], a wagon cover I think, which they brought to me, and as many of us as could crawled under it, so that outside of the four sides were four lines of heads, the bodies being covered with canvass [sic], and all pointing towards the centre [sic]. This covering was very acceptable, as we had been two nights without any, and although we were from the "frozen north," yet we did not find it over comfortable to sleep on the ground in the open air in the month of January, even in the balmy clime of Tennessee. Before daylight, on the 2d of January, we moved to the rear of our artillery, and rested on our arms ready to support it when necessary.

The confederates had in the night brought up three batteries of artillery, eighteen guns, and placed them point blank at a distance of about eighty rods from and immediately in front of our position, which was protected by our own battery and two others, giving us at this point the same number of guns (eighteen) as the enemy.

THE FIFTH DAY.

Friday, January 2d, 1863. - In the morning, after some preliminary skirmishing, the ball opened and these thirty-six pieces of artillery were loaded and discharged as rapidly as possible, so that it was one continuous and deafening roar of cannon. My regiment was in the open ground immediately in rear of Capt. Bradley's battery, behind us being quite a little elevation of cleared ground, and the ground in our front also rising gradually to the point where the batteries were placed, so that we were in a slight hollow as it were.

When the cannonade commenced the men were ordered to lay down on their arms, and in this trying position they were obliged to remain for an hour or more, while the balls and shells were flying not only over and around them, but into their ranks, killing and wounding their comrades, and scattering their blood, brains and limbs over the survivors in every direction.

This, in my opinion, was the most trying ordeal through which my regiment passed while under my command, and was the severest test of its courage and discipline which it could undergo. When the men were actually engaged in the conflict, there was an excitement and necessity for exertion, which of themselves took away all thought of personal danger, or of self at all, but here, perfectly inactive, with the flash and the roar of artillery, and the ceaseless tearing of the balls over and through their ranks, or in the ground immediately around them; the shrieking and bursting of shells, taken altogether, was a more trying test of all the qualities which go to make up a good soldier than any other which it has been my fortune to witness. My regiment went through that trial without flinching, though one out of every eighteen of the little band I had remaining

after the fight of Wednesday was either killed or wounded while thus lying in their ranks, and this is a large proportion of casualties for any artillery fight.

When the batteries commenced firing, all the mounted officers sent their horses to the rear. This we did to protect them from the fire which was concentrated upon our position. I was immediately in front of my regiment from first to last, and between it and the batteries, part of the time lying down and part of the time moving in front of my men. While lying down a cannon ball passed over me and struck the ground so near my feet that it would have hit me had I been sitting or standing, and this narrative would never have been written. Col. Harker was lying by my side at the time. The shower of balls and shells was so incessant that it was one continued whiz and whirl of solid balls or explosion of shells. I shall never forget a comparison or figure that presented itself to my mind as I was watching the cannon balls strike the ground near my regiment, then ricocheting and bounding away over the eminence, disappear in the distance. I had often watched a locomotive engine drawing a long train of cars on the Michigan Central railroad, and regarded it as one of the best representatives of force that I had ever seen or could imagine, and now, on the battle field of Murfreesboro, seeing the cannon balls flying through the air, tearing up the ground and moving out of sight with apparently little or no diminution of force, the figure of the locomotive engine presented itself to my mind, and I could not but draw a comparison between the two, as I then did, so unfavorable to the latter as to lead me to say to myself that hereafter it would not be with me the first and leading representative of force.

This artillery duel continued for over an hour, and was the closest, heaviest and most hotly contested of any artillery fight during the battle. The ground in front and rear of my regiment was literally ploughed with cannon balls. Just before the close of the fight, one of our batteries, said to have been the "Board of Trade Battery of Chicago," retreated out of line and took position in rear of our right, from whence they by mistake or for a less excusable reason, opened fire on my regiment and the battery of Capt. Bradley. I immediately moved my regiment to the left and across the railroad, so as to be out of range of this fire in the rear. Capt. Bradley was very indignant, and said to me that he should prefer charges against the commander of the offending battery, but if he ever did so they were suppressed for the good of the service. About the time that I moved my regiment the confederate batteries finding that they could not drive us from our position, and were suffering as much damage as they inflicted, ceased firing and withdrew.

The same tactics which came so near being a success on Wednesday in the attack on our right wing, was on this day (Friday) again put in practice against our left wing. Immediately after noon that portion of the left wing which was across Stone [sic] river was attacked by an overwhelming force of the enemy and driven back some distance, some of them even across the river in considerable disorder, and but for the foresight and ability of Gen. Crittenden the left wing might on this day have fared as badly as did

the right wing on Wednesday. Gen. Crittenden had stationed his batteries on the north or west side of the river so as to completely command the opposite bank, and enfilade any force advancing down the river. When our troops were forced back and the confederates came within range they were met at once with so crushing and deadly a fire that their advance was checked. Gen. Crittenden had also, as soon as the force and effect of the attack was realized, dispatched reinforcements so that in a short time the advance of the enemy was not only checked, but the ground lost regained and held until the final close of the battle.

When the fight across the river was the hottest, orders came for our brigade to march at once to the rescue. Since the close of the artillery duel the horses of our mounted officers had not come from the rear, where they had been sent to avoid the cannon balls and shells. We now sent for them, but they could not be found. The fire had been too hot for our attendants, and they had gone to such a safe distance that our messenger could not find them, and we were all obliged to march on foot with our commands. This involved the fording of Stone [sic] river, which all alike were obliged to wade through, and we found it no desirable undertaking on a raw January day. The water was not above our knees and we at that time thought but little of it, so much were our minds engrossed with the stirring events of the day. When we arrived on the ground the enemy had retreated and the firing nearly ceased. We were stationed in a corn-field, where we bivouacked for the night, and in the meantime our attendants came up with our horses after having some difficulty in finding us when they returned to where they had left us. I was very glad to see them, as all of my scanty supplies were strapped to my saddle.

NIGHT OF JANUARY 2d, 1863.

Soon after dark the rain commenced to fall and continued to pour down heavily all night. The ground on which we were located - a cultivated corn-field - was one mass of mud. I had two rubber sheets strapped to my saddle, one of which I spread on the ground and with the other over me I laid down, "accoutered as I was," regardless of the mud, the rain, and of the report of the guns, great and small, of which there was more or less all night. During the night our troops were engaged throwing up breastworks, each regiment working two hours, and then relieved by another. When my regiment was called for, Lieut. White, who was acting as adjutant, said to me, "Colonel, don't get up; I can take out the regiment and superintend this work; you are very much fatigued and can be of no service, as it is merely labor that is wanted - lie still and you will be better prepared to service to-morrow." I felt that he was right, and that I would better perform my duty by following his suggestion than I would to get up and go with the regiment on fatigue duty, working in the intrenchments. There is a limit to human endurance, and I began to feel that so far as I was concerned, unless I took care not to expose myself unnecessarily, I should soon reach it, and I concluded it would be better for the service and for myself if I should remain where I was. I accordingly did so, though the degree of comfort with which I rested may be inferred from the fact that when I got up in the

morning and pulled up the rubber sheet on which I had been lying there was an indentation in the mud made by my body of about one-third of its depth, and this immediately filled with water. Such were many of the "comforts" of the life of a soldier, and of which those have had no experience can form but little if any correct idea.

THE SIXTH DAY.

Saturday, January 3d, 1863. - On Saturday, it rained nearly all day. We moved out of the mud, but remained on the Murfreesboro side of the river. There was no close or heavy fighting, but sharpshooting, skirmishing and artillery practice all along the line. From our batteries we shelled their lines, and it was evident that Gen. Rosecrans was making arrangements for a general advance as soon as the weather would clear off enough to enable troops to move. This, however, it did not do during the entire day on Saturday. Up to this time, though we had marched from Nashville in pursuit of the confederates for the purpose of forcing a battle, and had brought them to a stand at Murfreesboro, yet so far, in the actual fighting, we had up to this time invariably fought on the defensive. To this there was on no day and at no time an exception. Our army, as an army, had not since Monday night made an offensive movement. The confederates had taken the initiative on Tuesday morning and had followed it up so well as always to act on the offensive, and keep our army on the defensive. In my judgment Gen. Bragg had, up to this time, displayed decidedly the best generalship. His army every day had been directed for a purpose, which became apparent to us only when the attack was made. Our losses in men, cannon, provisions, and in all warlike material, was greater than theirs, and I am unable to understand why Gen. Bragg abandoned the field and retreated south across the Tennessee river with his army instead of renewing his tactics by again concentrating his forces and attacking some part of our line, or of acting on the defensive and awaiting the issue of an attack by our army. In doing so he, in my opinion, made a great mistake, and left not only the prestige but the fruits of victory with Gen. Rosecrans and our army, while he could not claim that his army had been so badly defeated as to make such a movement necessary. It was this error of the confederates, as well as the courage and tenacity with which our forces held their position, and the tactics of Gen. Rosecrans, which gave us the final triumph. After dark on Saturday night there was heavy musketry firing across the river and apparently in the centre [sic], but there was no attack from either side and no engagement.

Sunday, January 4th, 1863. - On Sunday morning the rumor came from all quarters that the confederates had abandoned the field of battle, evacuated Murfreesboro, and were in full retreat south towards the Tennessee river. This we soon found to be true, and our forces occupied the town some time in the forenoon. Our brigade crossed the river and were taken to more comfortable grounds, where we bivouacked and were given an opportunity to take the rest that all, officers and men, so much needed; and where, for the first time since the Sunday preceding, they were allowed to build fires and supplied with food sufficient to satisfy the cravings of hunger.

The feelings of the men are best exemplified by the expression of one of them as we were marching by the right flank on to the grounds on which we were to bivouac. He exclaimed, so loud that I heard him, and the words came as from the bottom of his heart: "Thank the good God, here are plenty of rails!" meaning that they indicated good fires, warmth and some degree of comfort. I was more affected by the hearing of this cry than by an incident of the battle, and the tears came into my eyes. To understand the full force of what was said it must be remembered that this was in mid-winter, in January, and that not a man of my regiment had been near a fire since the previous Sunday, except a few officers a short time on Wednesday night, and in the mean time there had been heavy rains two nights and all of one day. In addition to this, rations were necessarily served so irregularly, when at all, that we were hungry most of the time. We did not get in any one day more than would suffice for one good meal. We were always in the front, and it is no exaggeration to say that there was no hour of daylight from Monday afternoon when we crossed the river until Saturday night that we could not hear the bullets whistle. That the battle was well fought, and was one of the most sanguinary on record is proven by the proportion of casualties. According to the official report of Gen. Rosecrans he went into the fight with 43,400 men and of these 8,778, or over twenty per cent of his entire force, were killed or wounded, while the comparative loss of the left wing, of which my regiment was part, was twenty-four and a half per cent, or almost one-fourth of the whole. In my regiment we had killed and wounded thirty-nine and three-fourths per cent of our whole number, being within a fraction of double the proportion of the casualties sustained by our army as an entirety. This great loss in my regiment proves the fierceness of the conflict, and the courage and determination with which we held our ground on Wednesday, the 31st of December, when most of this great loss occurred. At the close of the fight, on Sunday morning, at roll call every man of my regiment was accounted for; there was not one man "missing." All who had left Nashville were "present," dead, or wounded and in the hospital. There were but few, if any, regiments in the whole army with so clean a record.

THE HOSPITALS.

After I had seen my men supplied with rations, and made as comfortable as they could be without tents, I went to the hospitals, to look after the wounded officers and men of my regiment.

I cannot describe the scenes I saw there or the impression made upon my mind by them, but I hope I may never be called upon to look on the like again. Stretched on each side of each of the doors of the main building were several dead bodies awaiting burial. Inside of this hospital, a large, abandoned brick house taken for that purpose, every room of which was filled with the dead, the wounded, and the dying, the odor, for want of proper ventilation, was simply intolerable. Capt. Webb, who was wounded on Wednesday, was in one of the rooms. I went in to see him, I am not squeamish or nervous, I never fainted in my life, and never before or since was made so sick by any offensive matter as to be in any danger of vomiting, but here, in this hospital, where the wounded officers were obliged to breathe this vitiated atmosphere all of the time, I was so overcome by the stench and became so sick that to avoid vomiting I was obliged to leave the building. Very many of the wounded were in tents, and I have no doubt but they had much better chance for recovery than those in the hospital buildings. Capt. Webb was not thought to be severely wounded. He was hit by a musket ball in the arm. The surgeons decided that it could be saved, and it was not amputated, but instead of saving his arm he lost his life. Owing, I have no doubt, to the impure atmosphere in which he was kept, gangrene set in and he died soon after. There were many wounded to be attended to, and quite a number of volunteer surgeons had come or been sent to the assistance of those attached to the army. Some of these were accused of taking advantage of the situation to perform surgical operations, particularly amputations, when they were not necessary. Certain it is many such were performed either through ignorance or design, and many times the responsibility of such an operation was taken by surgeons who acted with more haste than discretion. I, myself, heard an army surgeon, a medical director, say "the butchery was horrible," that much of it, "was so unnecessary as to disgrace the profession," and such was his indignation at what he believed to be the principle, or want of it, governing the action of such surgeons that he said emphatically that "one-half the operators ought to be shot." I have no doubt but many of these operations were very reprehensible, but they were perhaps unavoidable under the circumstances, as the regular army surgeons could not attend to more than a tithe of the wounded. The only cause for surprise is that any surgeon from the loyal states could be so brutal and heartless as to experiment, or perform a surgical operation, without a sufficient reason, on men who were suffering at such a time, in such a cause.

In corroboration of what I have said I give the following extract from the letter of a correspondent of the Ohio State Journal:

"MURFREESBORO, JANUARY 14, 1863.

"On the morning of January 3d I visited the hospital tents of the eleventh brigade, and although I nerved myself to witness any amount of suffering it made me sick of life, and disgusted with humanity. In close proximity to a large tent I saw nearly a cord of amputated legs, arms, and feet, interspersed with slices of human flesh, lacerated and torn by shells and cannon balls.

"Every few moments men would arrive with a wounded man, and dump him down as if he were a log of wood. Such is war. The finer feelings of human nature are blunted by the frequent occurrence of death and suffering, and if you have no intimate friend or companion who has in former times messed with you, and is pledged to see that you are tenderly taken care of in case of casualty, you will stand a poor chance after a hard fought battle. You, at the north, who have neither seen or felt the realities of a sanguinary war, know nothing about it, neither can you realize it. The surgeons (with few honorable exceptions), the very men who are appointed and paid by the government to alleviate the sufferings of the sick and wounded soldiers, become so accustomed to sickness and suffering that they are as hardened and callous as the nether mill stone; no word of condolence or encouragement ever escapes their lips."

After return from the hospital I wrote my wife, in pencil, as follows:

HEADQUARTERS 13TH REGIMENT MICHIGAN VOL. INF.

IN CAMP NEAR MURFREESBORO, TENN., JANUARY 5TH, 1863.

MY DEAR WIFE: - After being under fire ten successive days we yesterday had a day of rest. We were three times in severe engagements, under a most terrific fire from musketry and cannon, and every day under scattering fire. Nearly half of my men are killed or wounded. In the engagement of the 31st over one-third of my men were hit, and my own escapes have been almost miraculous. I was on horseback on the 31st during the entire engagement, and had the bridle shot off so that the bits fell out of the mouth of the horse. The thirteenth was the only regiment of the brigade that was not driven off the ground, and we recaptured two pieces of cannon which our brigade had lost, and took sixty-eight prisoners. The fight was a terrible one, and no regiment has done better, if as well as mine, * * * * Our position was a most important one, and we maintained it. I send you a copy of my official report. For myself I can only say to you that the hotter the fight the clearer my perceptions were, and the cooler I was. * * * * I am very busy writing reports, looking after the wounded, procuring supplies, etc.

"We have had a good deal of rain and no shelter since I last wrote you, with but little to eat. The hospitals are awful to behold, worse than even the field of battle. You can form no idea either of the one or the other, and God knows I never want you to see either.

"I do not believe we shall have any more fighting here. As Gen. Crittenden said "it was a year's fighting crowded into a week." From Wednesday morning till Saturday night the fighting was incessant. Strange as it may seem, I have no doubt but my regiment saved the army. We were on the extreme right, which the enemy tried to turn, and if they had succeeded they would almost certainly have had our whole army at their mercy. Our brigade was attacked and every regiment but mine was beaten and dispersed, the battery driven back and two pieces of it captured, and nothing between the enemy and the accomplishment of their object but my little regiment. I knew the importance of our position and determined to make the most of it. I saw no superior officer during the fight, and managed the whole thing myself. I must confess we succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations, for I verily believe the enemy outnumbered us ten to one. It was wonderful the way my men held themselves under fire. I have seen nothing like it. I was shouting to them all the time, and when we advanced I took off my hat, and swinging it around my head charged with them straight on the enemy, who turned and run, thinking undoubtedly that it was a large body of troops attacking them.

"I am very well, but excessively fatigued, as are all the officers and men. I think the number killed and wounded on both sides larger than in any battle ever before during the war. A lieutenant that we took prisoner told me that my regiment did terrible execution on them as they advanced on us; that they had a great many killed and wounded. Remember me to my friends. I have not heard from you since we left Nashville. We have no mail. Kiss the children.

Affectionately your husband,

M. SHOEMAKER."

FURTHER OF THE BATTLE OF WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31, 1862.

The lapse of time - it is now 1878 - reflection, and all the further knowledge I have since been able to obtain, not only confirm the opinion expressed in my narrative as to the important bearing the action of my regiment had upon the battle of Murfreesboro, but render it still more clear to my mind that if we had not made the stand we did, when we did, and as we did, the battle would have been irretrievably lost, and in this I think all unprejudiced minds acquainted with the ground on which the battle was fought and the

facts, most of which are shown by the official reports, and as well known to my regiment and to the brigade, will agree with me.

In corroboration of my views, I give the following extract from the Nashville Union, Tennessee, which was copied into one of the Jackson papers, or I would not have known that it had been published:

“The bravery of the thirteenth regiment, and the gallant conduct of its commander, Col. Shoemaker, at the battle of Murfreesboro is universally applauded. The Nashville Union, of the 1st inst., thus compliments the regiment and its commander:

“A BAND OF HEROES.”

“The smoke and excitement of the late bloody but victorious battle of Stone [sic] river has passed away, and most of the regiments that distinguished themselves have received their meed of praise from the press. But there is one regiment that deserves more than a passing notice. We refer to the Thirteenth Michigan Infantry, belonging to Col. Harker’s brigade, Wood’s division.

“Col. Harker was ordered with his brigade from the left wing to support the right, and arrived in time to render efficient aid in checking the further progress of the rebel horde that had so suddenly been precipitated against McCook. The brigade was at once brought into action, the thirteenth Michigan being one of the regiments held in reserve. The overwhelming force of the enemy brought against the advance line drove them steadily back, when two guns belonging to the sixth Ohio battery were captured by the enemy. But they did not hold them long, as the thirteenth, which occupied a little cedar grove, were speedily formed and rushed upon the enemy, yelling like hyenas, charged them, drove them from their position, retook the lost pieces of artillery and over sixty prisoners. In the gallant charge the regiment lost about one-third of their active number engaged, but drove back a force outnumbering them at least ten to one. Great praise is justly due to this regiment for its unparalleled gallantry, both officers and men, who are said to have fought like heroes during the day, and when night came and the roll was called every man was ‘accounted for.’ They were either dead, wounded, or in the ranks; there were no stragglers from this regiment. The commander of the regiment, Col. Shoemaker, is highly spoken of, not only for his bravery in leading his men to this gallant charge, but for the judgment and ability he displayed in the management of his men during the battle. Truly, the state of Michigan has reason to be proud of the troops she has sent to defend the government and the Union.”

For the better understanding of all the causes which contributed to our success I will add, that both officers and men who were taken prisoners by us stated to me that when they halted on the line of battle of my regiment, the confederates gathered together in groups to examine the dead and wounded and to brake [sic] up the muskets on the ground. At this time the officers talked of the danger of an ambush, and that idea became prevalent in their ranks, so that when we charged down upon them through the cedar thicket, (their ardor having been dampened by the determined resistance which we had made), they were prepared to be surprised, and in reality fled without waiting to see our numbers or make any fight at all. Had the confederates not have halted - and they ought not to have done so until they encountered an opposing force - I would not have had time or opportunity to rally and form my regiment, and they would have encountered no opposition which they could not, with their numbers, have overcome without difficulty, and the flank of Gen. Rosecrans' army would have been turned. After this had been done it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to have saved our army from annihilation.

It was audacious for us to act as we did, but it was in that very audacity that the germ of success was contained, for had we advanced quietly and in regular order, we would most undoubtedly have been repulsed. Our success was owing to a number of fortunate circumstances; but this does not in the least detract from the merit of our success, for it is by taking advantage of just such circumstances that the fate of most battles is decided. We did not wait to see what the confederates were going to do when we found they had halted and were hesitating, but charged them with such ardor and noise that we at once turned their hesitation and disorder into defeat.

“Out of this nettle of danger we pluck the flower, safety.”

AFTER THE BATTLE.

On the night of the 5th of January it rained from dusk until morning. We remained on the same ground until the 7th, when we crossed Stone [sic] river, marched through Murfreesboro and bivouacked on the Bradyville pike. On the 9th I visited Col. Bradley, of the fifty-first Illinois. That night it rained again all night, and we were still without tents or covering of any kind to protect ourselves from these cold January storms. On the 10th I went in command of my own regiment and the sixty-fifth Ohio for forage. We filled all our wagons, but were out all day in the rain. On the 13th I was visited by Dr. A. W. Bowen, father of Capt. Bowen, of the one-hundredth Illinois Infantry, and Franklin Mitchell, father of Lieut. Mitchell of the same regiment, who was killed on Wednesday, both of Wilmington, Illinois and O. W. Stillman, of Joliet, Ill.

The second and third brigades went out to-day (the 13th) southward, on an expedition, the object of which, so far as I could judge, was to see if there was any force of the enemy in that direction. Though absent three days, we found no opposing force in arms.

On the 14th it rained in the afternoon and all night, so that on the morning of the 15th our camping ground was entirely under water.

The two brigades (2d and 3d) returned on the 15th from the expedition on which they started on the 13th. We had rain, sleet, snow and hail nearly all day, so that on the 16th our grounds were covered with slush. On Sunday, the 17th, our quarters being almost entirely under water and altogether uncomfortable, we moved to the Manchester pike, and our transportation came up the same day with our tents and supplies. We were now for the first time since Sunday, the 28th of December, enabled to make ourselves in some degree comfortable and have our regular supplies and rations. For just three weeks, in the heart of winter, with frequent and severe storms, we, in common with most of the army of the Cumberland, had been without tents or shelter of any kind, and most of the time with but a very scant supply of provisions, yet this, with all the discomfort and suffering attending our privations, was borne without a murmur, though I must say we were very thankful when our extraordinary trials were at an end, and we had to bear only those attendant usually upon an army in the field, which of themselves are such as none but those who have endured them are inclined to believe.

The active campaign was now closed, and the army, instead of following Gen. Bragg and pressing our advantage by preventing him from recruiting his now demoralized forces, was for months thereafter engaged in building the fortifications at Murfreesboro (which was made the strongest place in the west), but which were so extended that they would require an army to defend them, and in my opinion were never worth a tithe of the money expended upon them.

I think it proper to add, in explanation of the details of this narrative, that I have for many years kept a diary. I was able to do this while in the army, and this has enabled me to refresh my memory as to many incidents of the war. I can by reference to my diaries tell where I have been on any given day for over thirty years.

My letters to my wife were written with a pencil. I took advantage of every opportunity to write home, and frequently did so every day. At this time I had no thought but of consolation to my family in my absence. On my return I found most of them had been preserved, and as they always stated where we were and what we were doing, they, with my diary, gave quite a detailed history of the movements of the army of the Cumberland while I was in it.