

LEAF FROM CIVIL WAR NOTES

One Time Lee Outgeneraled the Federals.

A Fearful Charge of 500 Union Soldiers From Which Only 50 Ever Came Out Alive.

Lee was moving to invade Maryland and Pennsylvania. The mountains hid his marching columns from sight of the Federals, and at every gap in the Blue Ridge he left a force with instructions to hold out to the last and give him all the time possible to reach and cross the Potomac. It was the aim of the Federals to break through at some point and penetrate his movement, and there was fighting on every mountain trail and at the mouth of every mountain gap. The major general had said to the brigadier who was ordered to proceed to Thoroughfare gap:

"I do not know how many Confederates are holding that gap, but be the number 500 or 10,000 you must break through. That is the order—break through. If only one man of your command is left alive, he will bring us the news we want."

And the major general on the Confederate side had said to the brigadier: "You will detach one regiment of your command to hold Thoroughfare gap. It must be held against the Federals for three days. We can spare only a single regiment. If there is but one man left alive at the end of that time, he will follow on and overtake us."

A narrow wagon road, twisting and turning between walls from 20 to 100 feet high, with alternate spots of sunshine and gloom—that was Thoroughfare gap. As the skeleton regiment of 500 Confederates entered it and pressed forward to its western mouth, its ruggedness and gloomy solemnity brought a feeling of awe. It reminded them of a tomb, and they shuddered to think of dying in the semi-darkness. Two big pieces rolled along with the regiment of infantry, and the jar of the heavy wheels loosened a stone now and then to come clattering down from far above. When a blue brigade came clattering up, it was to find the 500 in possession and the position one which the dullest private must see was well nigh impregnable. Every hour was worth a thousand lives to the Federal army, and the Federal brigadier lost no time in beginning the attack. In the open he would have gobbled up that skeleton regiment at a dash. Behind a rocky wall hastily thrown up, with no way to get at the enemy except in front, his surplus of men did not count. At the sound of bugles they dashed forward with cheers, but not a man got within five rods of the wall. Grape and canister and bullets tore the lines to pieces. It was tried again and again. The orders were to break through the gap. A thousand dead and wounded would be a cheap price for the information to be had at the other end. Artillery was brought forward to batter down the wall, but it could not be placed to advantage. The pieces had only been fired once when their crews lay dead or wounded and the carriages were shattered. The Federal brigadier rode back and forth and stormed and swore and almost wept.

"Whether 500 or 10,000, you must break through!" were the orders, and if he failed to carry them out his career as a soldier was at an end. An army of 200,000 men was waiting to checkmate Lee. A whole nation was waiting to hear the splash of Confederate feet in the waters of the Potomac. The men in blue could hardly form company in the mouth of that defile. A charge against the wall meant death to every other man, but they formed up and charged and cheered and died. After half a day of bloody fighting the Federal brigadier rested. He was still bleeding from a wound when he opened a dispatch and read:

"You have one of the best brigades in the corps, and its certain you are opposed by only a handful of Confederates. By 9 o'clock in the morning you must have authentic news of Lee."

The brigadier had sacrificed 600 men that day, and he could not believe the Confederate loss to be over 50. There was but one way to reach them on the morrow—over that stone wall. He would drive them or die with the last man. There was no jollity in the Federal camp that night. Men will sing or joke as they swing into battle line in the open, but these men peered into the darkness of the gap and thought of the dead in front of the stone wall and spoke to each other in whispers. It was a brave sight to see them swing into line as the sun gilded the trees tops.

Every face had his pallor, and every eye looked into the midst of death, but there was no lagging or faltering. You saw them tightening their belts and setting their jaws as they waited, and you held your breath for the signal which was to send them to death.

On the other side of the stone wall there was no exultation. The dead and the wounded were comparatively few, but every hour would add to the number, and only one day of the three had passed. The colonel knew what was coming and prepared for it. When the blue lines ten deep, came dashing forward, they met with such a hail of iron and lead that the first three or four were blotted off the face of the earth. Then, under the smoke cloud, some of them wounded and all desperate, the other lines crept forward, and the wall was reached. It was a hand to hand fight now, and every man was a devil, and after a quarter of an hour of bloody fighting the Federals held the position. The dead lay three deep below the wall, but the living stood upon its crest and cheered and cheered again. But the cheering soon died away in growls and oaths. A quarter of a mile above, at the bend of the ravine, there was another stone wall, and the Confederates had simply withdrawn to the new position. They had lost 150 men, but the Federal brigade was no longer a brigade. It lacked a full regiment. That night the brigadier had another wound, and again there were orders from the major general:

"We must have news of Lee at every hazard. Unless you break through at once your resignation will be accepted."

A dark and narrow ravine, up which only eight men abreast could make their way at once; at the turn a stone wall, defended by two guns; behind the guns the muskets of the infantry.

"You must break through," repeated the brigadier over and over again. He knew that he could not do it. He knew that the best he could do was to pile up more dead in the dark ravine. When morning came, he stood on a knoll and looked down upon the sun bronzed and waiting veterans, and it was like a knife in his heart to give the order to attack. A single bugle call, and the column dashed forward. There was never a cheer nor a shout. Men who feel they are going to certain death do not cheer. They draw a long breath, choke back the gasp in the throat and rush forward with heads down. In ten minutes it was all over. The wall had been reached and fought over, but it could not be held. As the last few living Federals came limping back the brigadier sat down and wept. Orders, orders! And yet he felt himself a murderer. More Confederates had fallen, but the force was yet strong enough to hold the gap. If he could not carry it, he would be disgraced. Like the brave man he was, he took the one way out of it. At high noon the column was formed again, and the brigadier put himself at the head of it. Officers groaned and privates murmured to see him there, but he was firm. He led in the dark—he was the first to reach the wall—he mounted it and cheered his men in the fight which won it. But when it was won he lay among the dead, and the Confederates retired less than half a mile to a third wall. Two days had passed, and yet the Federals had not broken through. Then another brigade came marching up, and there was another brigadier to take command. He saw the situation as the dead general had seen it, but he had less feeling. Column after column was formed up and dashed against the third wall and driven back, but in the end he won. It was 20 lives for one every time, but under his orders he could have doubled the sacrifice.

At dusk on the evening of the third day the last Confederate infantryman had passed the gap on his way to the Potomac, and the head of the column was in Pennsylvania. Lee had played his card and won. Not a gap had been carried, and the news of his whereabouts had come from other sources. There was a last stone wall in Thoroughfare gap. Behind it 100 Confederates crouched and waited. Their two field pieces were useless for the want of ammunition, and their muskets were alone to be depended on. As the sinking sun filled the ravine with deeper gloom 500 Federals made a last charge. They had to tread the dead under foot to do it. That was the fourth charge of the day, and it was checked as the others had been. It simply meant more dead and wounded to choke that narrow way. Hundreds had been dragged out, but hundreds still remained. When night came down, 50 men with powder stained faces, who had scarcely broken their fast or closed their eyes for 70 hours, silently marched out of the gap and headed for the north in the wake of the invading army. There was no colonel, no captains, no lieutenants. A sergeant commanded the regiment remnant, and his command was:

"Out of h—ll and into Pennsylvania—forward—march!"

And when the long night had passed and daylight came again the Federals found the stone wall undefended and clambered over it and ran to the mouth of the gap to shout to each other:

"Lee has passed, and we are too late!"

Had a Kick Coming,

A man with a week's growth of beard on his chin and a fierce gleam in his eye stepped up to one of the windows in the postoffice and asked the clerk:

"Is this the registry department?"

"Yes," replied the clerk.

"I want to register a kick."

"Say, don't get—"

"I've got a 10 cent stamp that's never been used, and it's as good as new. I wanted to trade it for five 2 cent stamps at that window back there, and the fellow won't take it. A 10 cent stamp ain't no use to me. The government won't be out nothin', I says."

"You can sell it again, and"

"You needn't waste any of your time talking to me about it. He's got his orders, and you can't—"

"I ain't wastin' any of my time. I've got lots of it. I say it's a durned shame if the United States won't redeem its own—"

"Will you stand aside and let those other—"

"No, I won't stand aside. I'm goin' to get in my kick. When a government can't afford to make an even trade on a 10 cent stamp, I say it's gettin' mighty thunderin'—"

"I told you once!"

"I offered to take 9 cents and call it even if he'd let it go that way. I won't stand and chaffer over a cent. He wouldn't do that either. He knows I can't use a 10 cent stamp, but he thinks I have got to use 2 cent stamps and I'll have to buy 'em. I'll fool him on that. You see if I don't. If a good citizen is goin' to be treated this way by the government of these United States and the men it puts in office, I'll be durned if I ever buy another postage stamp as long as I live, so help me Captain Streeter! It's the durnedest, littles piece of business I ever—"

And he was still registering his kick in impassioned language when the uniformed floorwalker led him away.

A Smart Boy.

"Now, Willie, dear," asked his mother, "why did you not come when I called you the first time?"

"Because I did not hear you till you called the third time," said little Willie.

The heart of the mother was pained at this evidence of depravity. For how, she reasoned, could he have distinguished the third call without hearing the second?

"I know it was the third time, mamma," little Willie hastened to explain, "'cause you sounded so mad."

She clasped him to her bosom. A boy who could bolster up a poor story with a better one was not doomed to remain in obscurity.

Work Ahead.

"What's this?" exclaimed the division superintendent. "Here's an application from the station agent at New Era for eight assistant baggage smashers. The man must be crazy. I don't believe a trunk has been put off at that place for six months."

"But you know," his chief clerk explained, "that the State Federation of Women's Clubs is to be held there next Thursday and Friday."—Chicago Times-Herald.

A Quiet Wedding Last Night.

Last evening, in a cabin near the McDonald hotel, Mr. James Frazer McDonald, the genial and popular clerk of the McDonald hotel, was united in the holy bonds of matrimony to Miss Mina Caroline Trakell, of Kansas City, Kan. The Rev. Grant, of the Presbyterian church performed the ceremony, and Mrs. Phiscator and Dr. Thompson were the bridesmaid and groom's best man. There were present besides these Mrs. Roberts, Colon McDonald, F. Phiscator and Attorney Dan McKinnon. The ceremony took place at 10 o'clock, and immediately after the party repaired to the hotel where a quiet, though very pleasant, supper was served.

Mr. McDonald is well and favorably known here and counts his friends by the score, consequently the happy couple may expect to be subject to a deluge of congratulations from the many who wish them prosperity and happiness.

Whiskies at wholesale at the Northern Annex. Rosenthal & Field, props.

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