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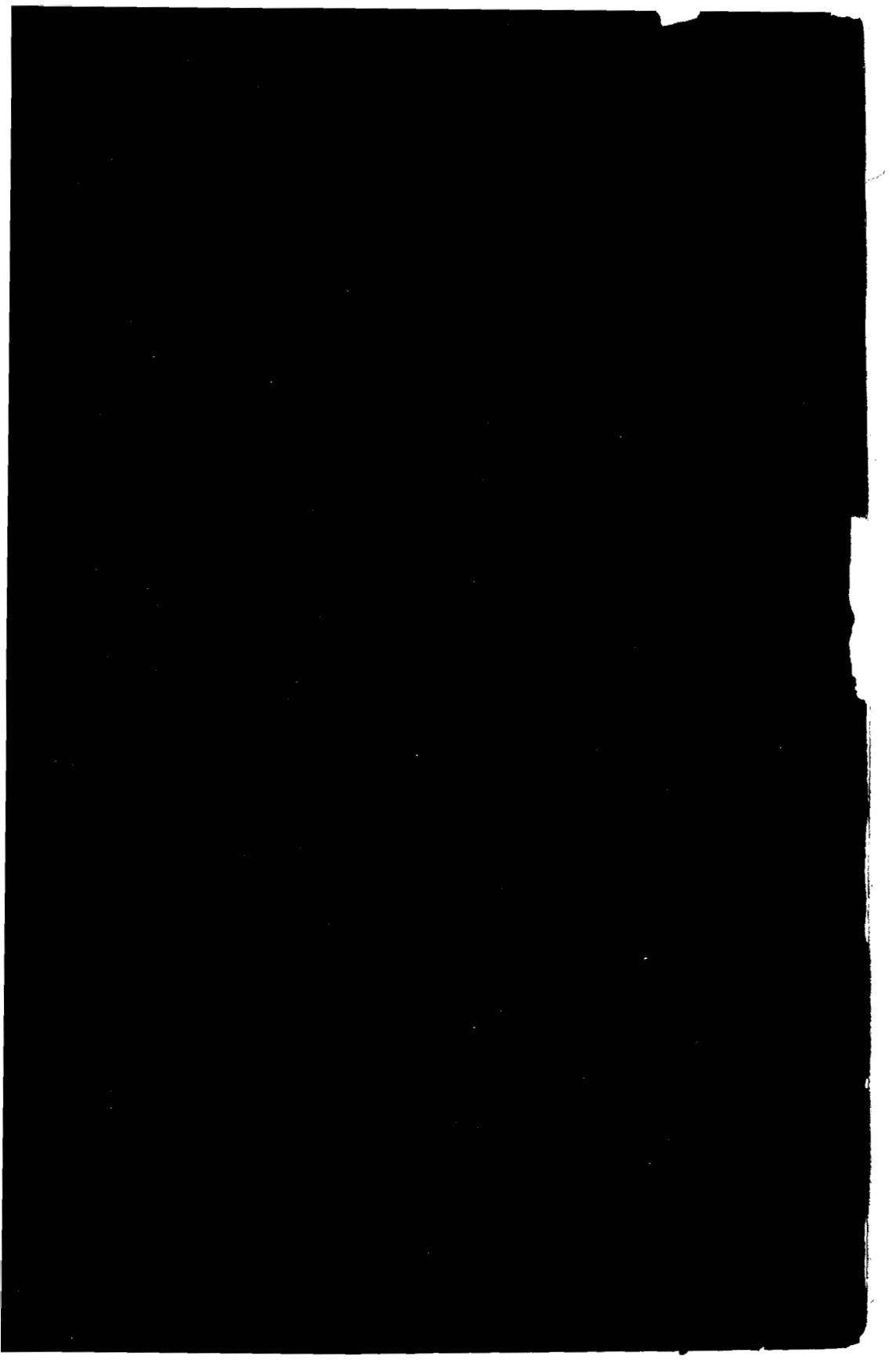
COMMANDERY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.



WAR PAPER 34.

Sheridan with the Army of the
Cumberland.





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WAR PAPERS.

34

Sheridan with the Army of the Cumberland.

PREPARED BY COMPANION

Captain

HENRY A. CASTLE,

Late U. S. V.

AND

READ AT THE STATED MEETING OF APRIL 4, 1900.

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Sheridan with the Army of the Cumberland.

The services and achievements of Gen. Philip H. Sheridan in the Eastern armies during 1864 and 1865 so completely filled the public eye at the time and have been so splendidly emblazoned on the pages of history as to obscure the lustre of a previous record that would have sufficed for an average ambition. That earlier record was not only conspicuous and honorable, but its events were a manifest preparation for greater things to come. Men who participated in those events naturally feel an interest in their rehearsal, not alone because of a pardonable desire to identify themselves, even modestly, with a grand career, but also because the rehearsal manifestly contributes to an adequate recognition of their hero.

The war record of Sheridan cannot be contemplated in its compact, systematic, harmonious entirety without some knowledge of his conspicuous service with the gallant division he led from Louisville to Chattanooga, and commanded in four memorable battles. None of his enthusiastic soldiers could then have dreamed out the details of his illustrious future, but all of them were ever ready to claim for him endowments equal to any emergency. His final success, was therefore, not an accident, or a flash of meteoric brilliancy. It was the well-wrought, well-earned consummation of highest soldiery qualities tempered in the fierce forges of a most trying experience.

On September 14, 1862, Sheridan arrived at Louisville from Grant's army at Corinth. He there learned for the first time that he was a Brigadier-General to date from July 1, preceding—a day when as Colonel commanding a brigade he had fought

and won the little battle of Boonville, displaying on that restricted field a spontaneity of resource and strategy which characterized his subsequent career

Sheridan conducted to Louisville, besides the Second Michigan Cavalry Regiment of which he was colonel, Hescocock's battery of artillery and four regiments of infantry—two from Illinois and two from Missouri. These four infantry regiments constituted what was known as the "Pea Ridge Brigade" for the excellent record made at that battle some months before. Nearly all the officers and men in the four regiments were Germans, but they fell into line under their young, Irish-American Commander with an alacrity which testified their appreciation. This brigade formed the nucleus of Sheridan's famous division which was organized in a few days, and which remained practically intact under his command, until eighteen months later he bade farewell to its survivors and to the Army of the Cumberland.

On September 25, Buell arrived in Louisville from the South, having won his race with Bragg, and on September 29, he assigned Sheridan to command a division, consisting of three brigades of four regiments each. This was designated as the Eleventh Division, Army of the Ohio, changed a few weeks later to the Army of the Cumberland.

Of the twelve regiments composing the division, seven were raw recruits mustered into service only a month before, undrilled, undisciplined, poorly armed and awkward in every thing but soldierly zeal and patriotic fervor. One regiment of German veterans was taken out of the "Pea Ridge Brigade" and into the vacancy was sandwiched one of these new organizations, the 73d Illinois Infantry, in which the writer hereof, a boy of twenty-one, was painfully acquiring a knowledge of the highly interesting and important duties of a private soldier.

The 73d Illinois was at the time widely known as the "Preacher Regiment." The Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel, Major, six of the Captains and several Lieutenants were Methodist preachers, and a large proportion of the enlisted men were the sons of prominent Methodist families in various parts of the State of Illinois. The incongruities of introducing an entirely new regiment thus constituted into a brigade with three regiments of old soldiers, nearly all Germans, may be readily imagined. The "Preacher Regiment" had not yet abandoned its early laudable practice of having prayers at morning and evening company roll-call. That practice did not long continue, however, under the new environment. It was thought at the time that the rapid disappearance of blankets, canteens and other movable property from the tents of the new regiment while these praiseworthy ceremonies were going on was a leading incentive to their discontinuance.

On October 1, Sheridan's division, just two days old and largely composed of undrilled recruits, started out with the remainder of Buell's forces to meet Bragg's army, and one week later fought in the sanguinary battle at Perryville, not only with credit but with honor. Under their leader's eye the recruits became veteran fighters in a night—the rudiments of drill they learned later on, and learned thoroughly. Perryville was a small town sixty miles southeast of Louisville. Here Bragg's army was overtaken on the evening of October 7, 1862. Buell's army was divided into three corps, commanded by Generals Crittenden, McCook, and Gilbert. Sheridan's division was in Gilbert's corps.

Early on October 8, Sheridan, in obedience to orders, moved his division to the extreme front, and after a hot fight captured a commanding position, protruding much beyond the proposed general line of battle. This position he held against

persistent efforts to dislodge him, and was thereby enabled to exert a decisive influence on the fortunes of the battle.

McCook's corps, consisting of Rousseau's and Jackson's divisions, came into position on Sheridan's left about eleven o'clock A. M. Shortly afterward the enemy made a terrific attack on the left of McCook's line. Gen. Jackson, commanding the division, and Gen. Terrill, commanding a brigade, were killed, and the troops, vastly outnumbered, were driven from the field.

The attack then reached Rousseau's division, which, in turn, after heroic resistance was obliged to fall back, leaving exposed the left flank of Gilbert's corps—the division of Philip H. Sheridan.

The situation became desperate. Bragg led the Confederate attack in person, and an easy victory seemed to be within his grasp. But he miscalculated the metal of his new antagonist.

Sheridan held the key to the situation and did not fail to comprehend the fact. He had been more or less engaged all the forenoon and had just repelled an assault on his front. He turned his guns on the victorious Confederates and checked their advance. Then with his own division and Carlin's brigade of Mitchell's division which had been sent to his support, he charged at double quick, broke the enemy's line, and drove them back through Perryville, capturing the town, fifteen wagon loads of ammunition and many prisoners.

The battle virtually ended at four o'clock in the afternoon, Sheridan, as usual, chafing because vigorous pursuit was not made. Next morning the enemy had disappeared, and the slow stern-chase was resumed which drove Bragg out of Kentucky without bringing on another engagement.

Buell's losses at Perryville were severe, considering the number of troops engaged. The killed, wounded, and missing

aggregated over five thousand. The enemy probably suffered still more, besides losing the field of battle, as about four thousand prisoners, many of them wounded, fell into our hands.

Perryville was the baptism of fire for an immense numerical majority of Sheridan's men, and it was his first battle as a division commander. The result was highly gratifying to all concerned. The General learned that he had the material for good soldiers, and the soldiers learned that they had a General whom they could implicitly trust. There was thus produced a feeling of mutual reliance and enthusiastic regard which continued undiminished during the entire period of their service together.

Sheridan fought this battle under C. C. Gilbert as corps commander. Gilbert at that time was a captain in the regular Army, a Brigadier General of Volunteers, whose commission was vacated a few months later by the failure of the Senate to confirm his appointment, and said to be a Major General of Kentucky militia. Sheridan outranked him by more than two months as a Brigadier-General and, of course, his Major-General's commission, if he had one, had no binding force under the circumstances. Sheridan knew these facts and so did all his men; in fact, Gilbert was universally spoken of as "Captain" Gilbert among the rank and file. Nevertheless, Sheridan rendered loyal obedience until some days after the battle, when he raised the question of rank by refusing acquiescence in some unimportant order, and Buell settled the controversy by transferring Sheridan's division to the corps of Gen. A. M'D. McCook, where it afterwards served. Sheridan's magnanimity is illustrated by the fact that in his Memoirs, written when he was full General and Gilbert was still only a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Army, he only alludes in the vaguest terms to this episode, not even mentioning names or recalling any unpleasant incidents.

It was during the Perryville campaign that I first met Gen. Sheridan personally, under circumstances which left an abiding impression. I was serving as Acting Quartermaster's Sergeant of the regiment during the temporary absence of that functionary. I was given a horse to ride, and felt naturally desirous to do all that was expected of me. At the end of a long day's march I was instructed by the Colonel to arrange for securing the daily rations of beef on the hoof, a duty which had been previously attended to by the Quartermaster who was that day far behind in charge of the regimental trains.

Utterly ignorant of the first steps to be taken I proceeded to brigade headquarters where the German-American captain who acted as brigade quartermaster very promptly snubbed me. Then on the Colonel's advice I proceeded to Division headquarters in search of information. Riding up from the rear to a row of tents pitched in an orchard, I saw a young man in his shirt sleeves sitting on a stump enjoying a cigar, and evidently ruminating on the beauties of nature. I checked the speed of my horse just in time to avoid running into him as he raised his eyes and exclaimed, "Who the — are you, anyhow?" I did not give him much satisfaction on that point but proceeded to explain my dilemma and asked him where to find the division quartermaster.

He seemed interested at once, and saying that he could tell me just what to do proceeded to give me explicit directions as to selecting the animals, detailing butchers, dividing the beef among the companies, et cetera. Having accomplished my errand I was just thanking him preparatory to my departure when a staff officer came up, saluted and spoke to him as General Sheridan. I, of course, promptly apologized for my unceremonious approach, but was assured that in the absence of insignia of rank my mistake was natural to a new soldier,

and was further informed that the General was ready at all times to instruct any inquirer in regard to any part of his military duties. I afterwards found this accessibility and willingness to instruct on the part of Sheridan to be one of his prominent characteristics, and it was necessarily the means of greatly increasing the efficiency of his command.

After Perryville, Buell's army marched to Bowling Green where he was superseded in command by General Rosecrans. It then proceeded to Nashville where nearly two months were spent in preparation for the Stone River campaign. Here Sheridan's division for the first time found leisure in camp for the drill and discipline which make soldiers. The drill was assiduously attended to while numerous scouting and foraging expeditions into the enemy's country laid the basis for active service which was to follow.

On December 26, 1862, commenced the Stone River campaign, the battle being fought near Murfreesboro', thirty miles southeast of Nashville. The Army of the Cumberland, under Rosecrans, was divided into three corps, under Crittenden, Thomas, and McCook.

After four days of preliminary marching and skirmishing the armies of Rosecrans and Bragg, each about forty-five thousand strong, confronted each other on irregular but very nearly parallel lines, and a few hundred yards apart, and on the night of December 30, both lay on their arms, with full assurance of a bloody struggle next day.

McCook's corps constituted the right wing of the Army. Gen. R. W. Johnson commanded the division on the extreme right; then came Gen. Jeff. C. Davis; then Sheridan—the latter touching on his left Negley's division of Thomas' corps. Rosecrans' plan of battle was that the right should stand fast, while the left, under Gen. Crittenden, should swing around,

capture Murfreesboro', and take Bragg's line in reverse. His orders were that the troops should all be under arms at day-break, ready to resist any assault—a thing to be especially expected by the right wing.

I was at that time Sergeant-Major of the regiment, and lay under a tree very near the Major, who was in command. An hour before daylight General Sheridan came along the line, on foot and unattended. He called for the Major, ordered him to arouse his men quietly, have them breakfast and form in line of battle at once. He thus personally visited each of his twelve regiments and saw that his orders were executed.

An hour after daylight the expected attack came on Johnson's division half a mile to our right and found it unprepared. Many of the officers and men were asleep or at breakfast; the artillery horses were being watered at a distant spring, and the division commander was at his tent, half a mile in the rear, unconscious of danger.

Hardee's assault was made on Johnson with great impetuosity and overwhelming force. It found the troops unprepared for effective resistance and soon drove them from the field. The attack fell on Jeff. C. Davis' division, in turn, and it, too, after stubborn fighting, was obliged to yield. It then came with augmented fury on Sheridan, but here preparation and discipline and magnificent leadership interposed to save the day. Had Sheridan's artillery been also abandoned, and his soldiers joined the disorganized mass of fugitives which environed them, nothing could have averted disaster to the entire army. But they stood like a granite ledge against the victorious enemy during the precious hour needed to rearrange the plan of battle, and the day was won.

Six times the rebels fiercely charged the unwavering lines and were each time hurled back with terrible loss, making no im-

pression. Three times the division changed front, facing the foe, until its position was completely reversed. Finally, the necessary time for Rosecrans' new dispositions having been gained, the ammunition being entirely exhausted, and one-third of the command lying dead or wounded on the field of their immortal achievement, Sheridan's division fell back, slowly and in order through the dense cedar thickets and went to its allotted place in the new line of battle.

Its work was not yet done. With replenished cartridge boxes and a half-hour's rest, the division was hurriedly sent to the assistance of Wood's division where it helped repulse a determined attack, fighting in open timber and in a railroad cut, and suffering more heavy losses.

Thus in various parts of the field and in most critical emergencies, Sheridan's division had sturdily performed its part, and everywhere its gallant commander, by the inspiration of his presence, by his coolness and intrepidity had won a new title to their confidence and devotion.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon, after eight hours practically continuous service on the firing line, the division was withdrawn from the immediate front by order of Gen. Rosecrans, and ordered to prepare for further service in a desperate charge which he then had in contemplation to recover some vital point of the field. The charge was not made, but a much-needed rest was gained by the weary troops who, as it turned out, had done their last serious fighting during the battle.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, while we were thus lying in reserve, my left hand was shattered by a rebel Minié ball, and I retired to the nearest field hospital to secure necessary surgical attendance. My active service with the regiment and with that army then ceased. For three days and nights I lay

upon the battle-field amid the thousands of dead and wounded, while at intervals the conflict raged in different directions which was to decide our fate. Finally, on Sunday, January 3, Bragg retreated from Murfreesboro', leaving Rosecrans master of the field, and on the same day I was sent back to the hospital at Nashville.

My promotion to the rank of adjutant was made immediately after the battle, but as it was contingent on the promotion of the former adjutant to be major, which latter was successfully resisted by some of the captains, my commission did not come. After some delay awaiting this decision I was discharged as an enlisted man. My wound did not heal for nearly ten months, and at the first opportunity thereafter I re-entered the service having raised a company of young men who elected me captain. My second tour of duty was with another army, but relatives and friends were numerous in the old regiment, and I naturally watched their subsequent career with unflagging interest.

Sheridan's total force engaged at Stone River was 4,154, and his loss in killed, wounded and captured was 1,163, or about thirty per cent. Among the killed were four brigade commanders. His splendid conduct in the battle was mentioned by his superior officers, and resulted in his promotion to the rank of Major-General of Volunteers, to date from December 31, 1862, the principal day of the battle.

The ensuing six months were occupied with various expeditions and operations of the Army of the Cumberland with headquarters at Murfreesboro'. After that interval began the march toward Chattanooga, resulting after many minor episodes in the great battle of Chickamauga.

On the morning of Sunday, September 20, 1863, the decisive day at Chickamauga, Sheridan's division occupied a position

near the extreme right of the army. The necessity of protecting the left from the onslaught of the Confederates was recognized early, and there was a general drift in that direction. The inopportune withdrawal of Wood's division from its place in the line of battle was quickly taken advantage of by the enemy, which poured through the gap in overwhelming numbers, cutting off Negley, Davis and Sheridan from the remainder of the army.

Determined and desperate fighting was done by the veterans of Perryville and Stone River to avert the impending disaster. One splendid charge was made, against overwhelming odds, by Laiboldt's brigade of Sheridan's division—a charge that almost deserves a place in history beside the immortal sacrifice of the First Minnesota at Gettysburg. The Seventy-third Illinois led this charge. My brother, C. H. Castle, then a boy of twenty years, a private in Company "I," now a prominent citizen and successful business man in Illinois, gave me the following vivid description of the incidents, after the lapse of thirty-five years:

"At about 11.30 A. M. General McCook came to Laiboldt, our brigade commander, and in person ordered him to immediately charge to rescue the division of General Jeff. C. Davis, which was being overwhelmed by the enemy. We were in fine position at the crest of a hill in heavy timber, and with our battery well located. Our formation was in four lines by regiments, the Seventy-third in front. Capt. J. L. Morgan was on Laiboldt's staff and distinctly remembers that when McCook gave the order Laiboldt suggested that we deploy, and that McCook replied with a peremptory order to charge as we were. Sheridan was not present at the moment, but was starting the march of his other two brigades, under an order from Rosecrans, toward our left, to fill a gap to the right of General

Thomas. We charged down the hill, across the open field in front of our battery and under a galling fire, passing the ravine and to a piece of timber which was swarming with Confederates. There in that hot-bed we remained fighting until they flanked our lines at both ends. It seemed to me that we stayed a long time, while in fact it was but a few minutes. Nevertheless, the time was so long and the place was so hot that I was twice shot down, each time by a ball in the leg, and received three other gun-shot wounds. The Major and Adjutant were killed and the Colonel unhorsed. It seemed that two-thirds of the men in my vicinity were either dead or prostrated with disabling wounds before we began to pull for the rear. In the meantime Sheridan, learning of our critical situation, marched his other brigades to our relief, and to that fact alone most of us who escaped death or imprisonment are indebted. So that while Sheridan was not there to put us in he was there to help us out, and he was reported to have expressed himself on the following day in language more forcible than polite regarding the manner of our going in."

The position from which this gallant, but costly advance was made was almost precisely that occupied by the headquarters tents of Major-General John R. Brooke when in command of the great military camp at Chickamauga Park during the summer of 1898. The sloping field in front was the ground over which the brigade sped in their onset, and the monument farthest to the front on that slippery slope, fixing the high-water mark of this heroic, though vain endeavor, is that of the old "Preacher Regiment," the Seventy-third Illinois.

As Laiboldt's brigade was hurled back, bleeding and decimated, to its original position, Sheridan's two additional brigades, commanded by Lytle and Bradley, aided in the rescue. But the same horde of Confederates that had overwhelmed

Davis and Laiboldt, poured in a deadly fire that soon effected their disintegration also. They were rallied, however, by Sheridan, and recaptured the ridge, but could not hold it long. The troops were driven with heavy loss, including General Lytle killed, and were again rallied by the indomitable Sheridan in attenuated ranks, on a range of low hills behind the Dry Valley road, scarcely a musket shot distant from the scene of their late exploits.

The enemy did not again attack in front, but endeavored to wedge in on the left, so as to cut off the sorely beset division from the remainder of the army. This necessitated another retrograde movement which brought it to the road leading through McFarland's Gap to Rossville and Chattanooga.

A new and serious responsibility now confronted the young commander. His two immediate superior officers, McCook and Rosecrans, thinking the day wholly lost, had abandoned the field and gone to Chattanooga. Thomas was holding Snodgrass hill, only a mile away, on the left, but the rebel army was fast encircling that position, shutting off direct access. Sheridan found himself leader, not only of the survivors of his own command, but of broken detachments from Davis' and Negley's divisions; of innumerable stragglers; of many pieces of artillery; of long wagon trains and of ambulances loaded with hundreds of the wounded.

He decided that his first duty was to conduct this mass of men and impediment to a place of safety, reorganizing his command en route, so as to give effective aid to Thomas as soon as that was accomplished. Accordingly he marched through McFarland's gap to Rossville, four miles on the road to Chattanooga, passing in the rear of Thomas' position at Snodgrass. Sheridan reached Rossville about four o'clock P. M., at the head of a procession including eight guns, forty-

six caissons, a long train of ammunition and wagon supplies, ambulances, etc., and more soldiers than the aggregate with which his division went into action in the morning.

Quickly disencumbering himself of all impediments, Sheridan marched out on the Lafayette road, which led directly to the left of Thomas' position at Snodgrass hill, where the "Rock of Chickamauga" had been working out, during that long and bloody day, one of the achievements that give men title to undying fame. By six o'clock P. M. Sheridan had reached Cloud's church, three miles south of Rossville, skirmishing constantly en route and capturing some of the enemy's field hospitals. At this point, less than a mile from Snodgrass, the staff officer sent out in advance to report to General Thomas returned with his instructions to halt and cover the withdrawal which was to commence early in the evening.

This order was obeyed. Sheridan's division held the post until the wearied and battle-scarred legions of Thomas marched by, then constituted the rear guard of the army as it fell back to Rossville. Sheridan accompanied Thomas in person, and received his warmest thanks for his aid, which was voluntary, and might have been vitally important.

These are the salient facts of the record, and this statement is the truth of history. If an attempt had not been made and persisted in to falsify that record, this paper would never have been written. The only serious accusation, to my knowledge, ever made against General Sheridan's military conduct was in connection with his withdrawal from the battle-field of Chickamauga. The luster of his great renown permits no brightening at my hands; he needs no defense; his immortality is secure. But justice to my comrades who served with him in the Army of the Cumberland, and to whom each episode of that service is a precious treasure, has impelled me to gather

and briefly record the proofs with which the statements I have made can be impregnably buttressed.

In some of the first newspaper reports of the battle it was stated that Sheridan abandoned his troops and left the field as did Rosecrans, McCook and Crittenden. These reports were accepted by many and have passed into some of the ephemeral historic records, and also found lodgment in the minds of men engaged in other parts of the field.

In Van Horn's history of the Cumberland, published in 1875 (vol. 1, p. 374), appears a statement by Colonel G. P. Thruston, of General McCook's staff, in which he says that he found Generals Sheridan and Davis on a road near Rossville, proceeding thither, and adds:

“Being Adjutant and Chief of Staff of the corps to which they belonged, I reported to them General Thomas' position and situation, and requested them to return and take position as directed by him. Davis ordered his men to right about at once and marched back, under my guidance, some of Negley's and other troops joining us. Gen. Sheridan said he preferred to go to Rossville and go out on the Lafayette road. I told him it was getting late and he could scarcely get on the field by that route before night, but he insisted on going that way, which was several miles around.”

It is stated that General Thruston, who is still living, has within recent years, added to the foregoing statement a positive allegation that Sheridan did not leave Rossville that night or in any way attempt to reach Thomas.

In the text of Van Horn's history (Vol. 1, p. 359) is the following: “General Sheridan moved through Rossville and reached the vicinity of General Thomas' left flank; but he was too late to attack the enemy, and General Thomas was ignorant of his movement.”

At a meeting of the Minnesota Commandery, Loyal Legion, three years ago, at which I was present, an officer of unquestioned bravery and veracity, who commanded a regiment on Snodgrass Hill, made the statement, doubtless based upon the authorities above quoted, that Sheridan went to the rear before noon with his disorganized command and disappeared from the battle.

The issue is thus clearly raised, "Did Sheridan go out from Rossville on that Sunday evening and report to Thomas?"

Sheridan in his official report of the battle and in his Memoirs distinctly states that he left Rossville and reported to Thomas, though as usual he claims less than the official reports and unassailable statements of others would justify.

Serial number 50 of the Rebellion Records contains reports of the Chickamauga campaign. These are the contemporary authorities, written before a controversy arose. From these reports the following brief extracts are made:

Garfield, Chief of Staff, telegraphs to Rosecrans at 3.45 P. M., Sunday, that he has reached Thomas via Rossville, and that "Sheridan is in with the bulk of his division, but in ragged shape, though plucky and fighting" (p. 141).

Negley telegraphs Rosecrans from Rossville at 8.40 P. M.: "One of my staff officers has just returned from General Sheridan's command. He reached the meeting house three miles from this point. He reports communication with General Thomas cut off by the presence of a considerable force of the enemy. Forrest's cavalry harrassed Sheridan all the way" (p. 144).

General Garfield telegraphs to Rosecrans from Rossville at 8.40 P. M.: "Sheridan gathered 1,500 of his division and reached a point three miles south of here at sunset" (p. 145).

Charles A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, telegraphs to

Secretary Stanton from Chattanooga, at 8 P. M.: "Davis and Sheridan have succeeded in rallying some eight or ten thousand of the fugitives and have also joined Thomas" (p. 193).

General Negley's official report of the battle says: "At this moment I learned * * * that General Sheridan had halted three miles from Rossville" (p. 331).

General McCook's official report of the battle says: "These (Sheridan and Davis') troops were placed in position by order of General Thomas on the road leading from the battle-field to Rossville" (p. 490).

Colonel Silas Miller, commanding a brigade in Sheridan's division, says in his official report: "By your order the command soon moved (from Rossville), this brigade in advance, passing on the Ringgold road three miles to — Church, arriving at dusk. Here the column halted until about 9 o'clock when by your order it returned to Rossville" (p. 584).

Major Carl von Baumbach, Twenty-fourth Wisconsin Infantry, Miller's brigade, says in his official report, "I moved my regiment up the Chattanooga and Ringgold road, about five miles, where he halted for a short time, and then marched back to Rossville" (p. 587).

The history of the Seventy-third Illinois Infantry (p. 226) quotes from the journal of Captain T. D. Kyger, as follows: "From the point where the regiment reformed after the charge we were taken by General Sheridan three miles to the rear, and then we were taken three miles in the direction of the left wing of the army to support it, if necessary."

D. F. Lawler, formerly of Company "B," Seventy-third Illinois Infantry, and president of the Association of Survivors of that regiment, writes me as follows: "Our numbers were greatly reduced by death and capture, but we were fully organized, and ready for business from two o'clock on. Gen-

eral Sheridan does not claim as much as his division was really entitled to, for our advance from Rossville. Judging from the stray shot and shell that passed over Thomas' lines as we were marching up in his rear, and towards his left flank, we came much nearer his headquarters than Sheridan claims."

Major E. E. Betts, Engineer, National Park Commission, writes to me that when Sheridan came out on the Lafayette road the maps show "He is in motion, passing the Bacon place at 6.30 P. M., and also at the Cloud Church at dark."

General H. V. Boynton, of the National Park Commission, perhaps the best living authority on the events of the battle and the topographical features of the field, writes me as follows: "Sheridan asked Rosecrans whether he should proceed to the assistance of General Thomas and was directed to do this. He thereupon left Rossville about five o'clock in the afternoon and his leading brigade (Lytle's), then commanded by Colonel Silas A. Miller, reached the Cloud Church at dusk, which was near seven P. M. From that point he returned later in the evening to Rossville. The distance from Rossville to Cloud Church is three miles and the distance from the Church to Snodgrass Hill is a mile and one-half."

Colonel Michael V. Sheridan, Assistant Adjutant General, U. S. A., who served on his brother's staff at Chickamauga and thereafter through the Civil War, was present at the meeting of the Minnesota Commandery heretofore alluded to, when the statement concerning Sheridan's abandonment of the field was made. Col. Sheridan promptly contradicted the assertion, and said that as General Sheridan neared Cloud's Church Sunday evening, he (then Lieutenant M. V. Sheridan) was sent forward to report to General Thomas and ask for instructions. He accomplished this errand and conveyed to General Sheridan the order to halt at the Church and cover the withdrawal of Thomas' army.

This array of authorities is certainly conclusive as against the unsupported assertions of possibly well-meaning persons who could have no personal knowledge of the actual facts. There is just discrepancy enough as to detail to negative all idea of collusion, and the pivotal truth stands out boldly that Sheridan did, on Sunday evening, march forward with his command from Rossville to Cloud's Church, a distance of three miles or more, report to Gen. Thomas from that point, and remain there until ordered by Thomas to return to Rossville. This is something very different from abandoning his command and leaving the field. The action of his noble division is something very different from abandoning the field in a demoralized mass only to be regathered and re-organized a day or two later within the intrenchments of Chattanooga.

After this long interval of time we can all, I think, measurably concur with Captain C. E. Belknap, Twenty-first Michigan Infantry, a soldier of the old division, who writes to me: "I have wondered and I still marvel at the bravery of Sheridan in going back to the battle-field after the terrible experience of that day. I have been a close student of Chickamauga and its results, and I think that Sheridan displayed the most courage and the best judgment of all the commanders in the Army of the Cumberland, with the possible exception of Thomas and the officers directly under him."

The Army of the Cumberland assembled within the intrenchments of Chattanooga, closely beleaguered by Bragg; Thomas superseded Rosecrans; Hooker's men came from the Potomac; Grant and Sherman with their men came from the Mississippi; Grant was placed in supreme command, and on November 25, 1863, two months after Chickamauga, was won the magnificent Union victory of Missionary Ridge.

Hooker attacked Bragg on our extreme right, at Lookout

Mountain; Sherman carried the northern extremity of Missionary Ridge on our extreme left; the Army of Thomas, the center, moved out from Chattanooga against the square, bold front of Missionary Ridge, girdled with entrenchments, frowning with the rebel artillery and guarded by the flower of the Southern forces, who laughed to scorn the idea of a successful assault. Sheridan's division occupied a central position in Thomas' line, his center brigade being directly opposite Bragg's headquarters on the summit of the ridge, a marked objective point of the movement, the key of the defensive line.

The fighting on the right and left wings had reached a stage where the Army of the Cumberland must make its crowning effort. Grant's order had manifestly only contemplated that the first line of rebel works, at the foot of the ridge, should be carried by this assault. But when the signal gun was fired, the divisions of Sheridan and Wood moved promptly to the charge, and Sheridan knowing his men and seeing the opportunity ordered his brigade commanders to go on, if possible, until the summit was reached and captured.

Then followed one of the most thrilling feats recorded in the annals of war. Few, who now coolly look over the ground, see the height and steepness of the ridge with its many obstructions of rock, tree and gully, would believe it within the power of mortal man to win in such a charge. But Sheridan placed himself in front of Harker's brigade, and through the storm of rebel missiles the troops pressed forward steadily to the first intrenchments. His three brigades went over the rifle-pits simultaneously, capturing all their occupants. After a short breathing spell, the ascent of the ridge began, and it never paused until the intermediate entrenchments were gained. Sheridan was in the midst of his men or in the van, and the line of regimental colors along his whole division

front was planted on the rebel works half-way to the summit.

After a slight change in disposition of troops, the grand, final effort was made, and right over the crest of the ridge at Bragg's headquarters, poured the exultant soldiers, with their idolized general in the front rank, and their bullet-riddled flags all "high advanced" in splendid triumph. The enemy has vainly poured its heavy fire of artillery and musketry into their faces as they came on, and was stricken dumb with consternation at the achievement. Bragg himself narrowly escaped; some of his high officers were captured; the two pet guns, "Lady Breckenridge" and "Lady Buckner," which guarded his sacred person, fell into the pious hands of the Preacher Regiment.

Sheridan captured 1,762 prisoners and seventeen pieces of artillery. But he did not stop even with this great success. He alone of all the Union Commanders pursued the enemy beyond the ridge, and if he had been properly supported, Bragg and half of his army might have been captured. Sheridan's division followed the rebels impetuously more than two miles; drove them across Chickamauga river; had a severe fight; made more captures of men and guns, and finally, after dark, receiving no support, gave up the one-sided contest. General Grant says in his Memoirs, "To Sheridan's prompt pursuit the Army of the Cumberland and the nation are indebted for the bulk of the capture of prisoners and small arms that day."

The effective force of Sheridan's division in this battle was 6,000. Its loss was 123 officers and 1,181 men killed and wounded—none missing. Not a single life was wasted, but the above figures comprise one-third the casualties of the entire Union force, Sherman's and Hooker's included.

Thirty-seven years have passed. A land-mark for miles, on Missionary Ridge, is the towering monument which the Imperial State of Illinois has erected to the valor of her sons, on the site of Bragg's headquarters. In the shadow of that monument, guarded by the effigies of brass-throated "Lady Breckenridge" and "Lady Buckner," stand the granite monoliths of the Second and Fifteenth Missouri and the Seventy-third Illinois.

This was Sheridan's last battle with the Army of the Cumberland. He performed efficient work as a district Commander during the subsequent winter, led one or two important expeditions, and finally, when all was quiet for a time, took a short leave of absence—his first respite from active duty since entering the military service in 1853.

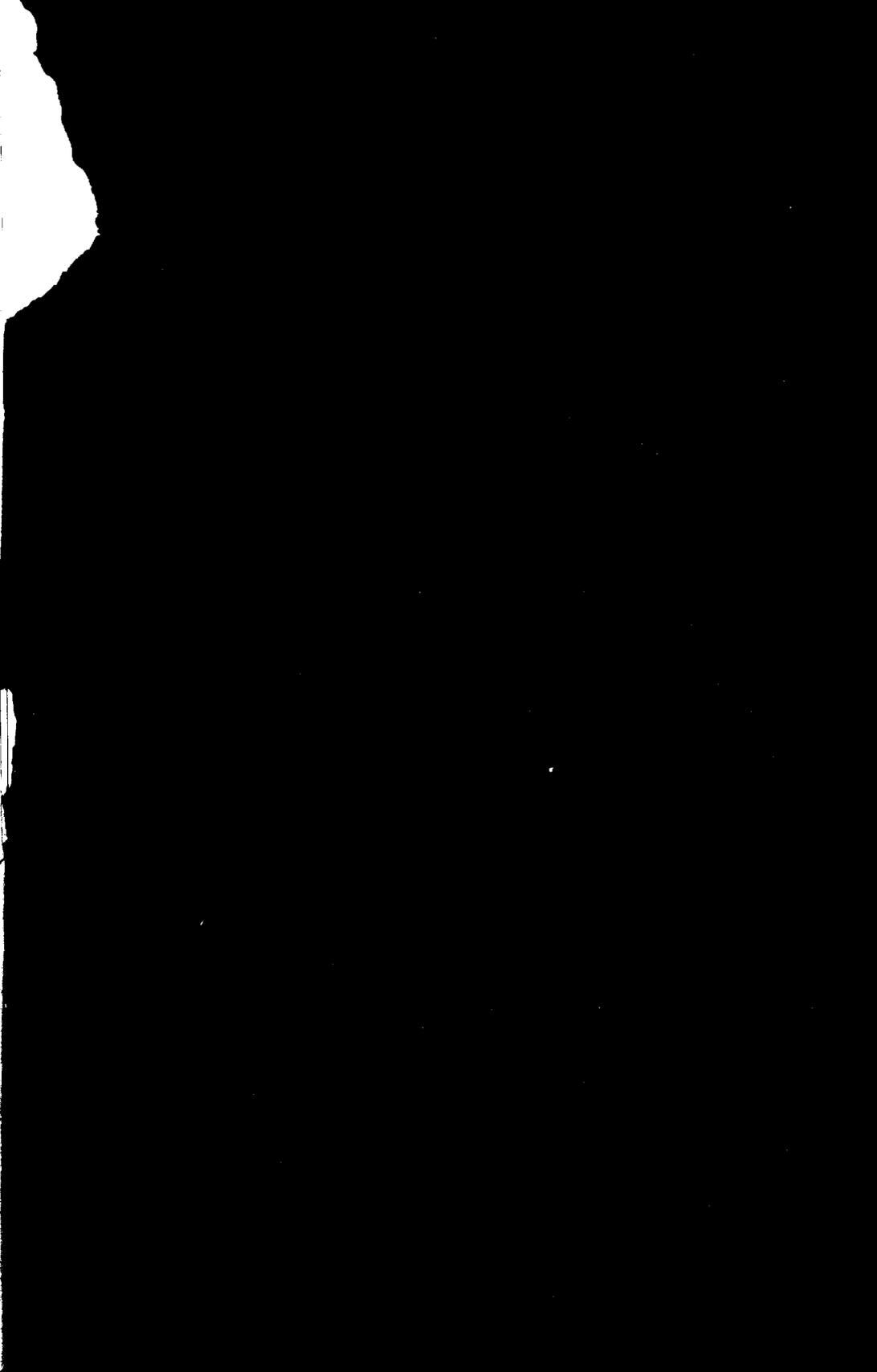
On March 23, 1864, by order of Lieutenant General Grant, he was detached from the Western armies, and ordered to Washington. The promise of Boonville had borne ripe fruitage at Missionary Ridge under the eye of the great Commander. The brave and energetic Sheridan, every inch a soldier, every ounce a hero, was to win on wider and more conspicuous fields an unassailable title to a place among the great captains of history.

All his later triumphs never quenched his pride in his early command, or cooled his affection for the officers and men who from Perryville to Missionary Ridge responded to every call he made, with dauntless heroism and willing sacrifice. No soldier of his old division, however humble in rank, who made his identity known, ever failed to receive that cordial welcome at his hands, which is the test of true comradeship and genuine manliness. When he prematurely passed away, the Minnesota Commandery of this Order appointed on the Committee with General T. H. Ruger of the Army, Archbishop Ireland and

other Companions, an enlisted man of Sheridan's old division, the writer hereof, who being assigned to the duty, prepared the following, which appears in the memorial volume:

“Philip Henry Sheridan, General commanding the armies of the United States, and Commander-in-Chief of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, died August 5, 1888. Lifted by approved merit and magnificent achievement through successive gradations to rank among the foremost leaders in the struggle for national preservation, he has lived until now, wearing worthily the laurels he so nobly won, and witnessing the augmented prosperity of the land he so bravely defended. The eager gratitude of his admiring countrymen was ever in advance of his own modest self-assertion in appreciation of his soldierly qualities and in recognition of his splendid deeds. It is an added poignancy to their grief that his sudden removal, in the golden prime of his manhood, blights their expectation of lengthening future years in which to manifest their enduring regard by cumulative honors. While thus the nation mourns, there comes to the surviving companions of his illustrious service a keener pang. Within the sacred pale of that comradeship there is sorrow none outside can measure, for it embodies memories and loves and premonitions others cannot know.”

After twelve years I can add nothing to this tribute. I will certainly detract nothing from this estimate. The whole earth is the sepulchre of a hero, and all mankind are co-partners in the legacy of his glory. But the Army of the Cumberland, the fourth corps of that army, and the second division of that corps, will possibly be pardoned for asserting title to a special interest in the name and fame of PHILIP HENRY SHERIDAN.



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