

the task; and never was a leader seconded by more gallant soldiers. His division formed a kind of pivot upon which the broken right wing turned its flight. Its perilous condition can easily be imagined, when in the fight Davis' division left it without protection from the triumphant enemy who now swarmed upon its front and right flank; but it fought until one-fourth of its number lay bleeding and then it gave way. The retreat changed to a rout, only less complete than that of the troops of Johnson and Davis. All these divisions were now hurled back together into immense ravines and cedar thickets, which skirt the turnpike and extend far over to the right. Brigade after brigade and battery after battery from Palmer's, Negley's and Rosecrans' divisions, were sent into the thickets to check the progress of the foe and rally the fugitives; but all in turn were either crushed outright by the flying crowds or broken by the impetuosity of the foe and put to confused flight or compelled to retire and extricate themselves in the best manner that seemed to offer.

The history of the combat in these dark cedar thickets will never be known. No man could see his own regiment. No one will ever be able to tell who there fought the bravest or who proved recalcitrant to their trust. In spite of their heroism and devotion; in spite of the desperate struggles which marked every fresh advance of the foe; in spite of the awful sacrifice of life on the part of the officers and soldiers of the Union army, the rebels still steadily pushed onward and came nearer and nearer to the turnpike.

Nearly two miles and-a-half of the right wing of our army had been driven in, and faintness of heart came over me, as the destruction of the whole army seemed to stare me in the face, but when the word went forth from Rosecrans, the flower of the left wing and centre hurried over towards the right and massed rank behind rank in array of imposing grandeur along the turnpike and facing to the woods through which the rebels were advancing.

The scene at this time was as grand and awful as anything I ever expect to witness until the day of Judgment. I stood upon the highest point of a somewhat elevated space, being between the turnpike and the railroad fronting the key to our position. Had the rebels once obtained possession of it and of the immense trains of wagons packed along the turnpike the Union army would have been irretrievably ruined. Even if its line of retreat had been cut off, nothing could have saved it from utter rout, slaughter and capture; and yet each minute it became more and more plainly evident that all the reinforcements which had been hurried into the woods to sustain and rally the broken right wing and check the progress of the enemy in that direction, had proved inadequate to the task and had in turn been overthrown by the great mass which was struggling in inextricable disorder through the woods.

Such sounds as proceeded from that gloomy forest were enough to appal with terror the stoutest hearts. The roar of cannon, the crashing of shot through the trees, the whizzing and bursting of shells and the unintermitted rattle of thirty thousand muskets, all mingled in one prolonged and tremendous volume of sounds, as though all the thunders of heaven had been rolled together. Above all could be heard the wild cheers of the traitorous hosts, as body after body of our troops gave way and nearer came the storm. Louder and louder resounded the tumult of battle. The immense trains of wagons packed along the roads suddenly seemed instinct with struggling life and every species of army vehicles, preceded by frightened mules and horses, rattled away pell-mell in an opposite direction from that in which the victorious foe was pressing onward. The shouts and cries of the terrified teamsters urging onward to the top of their speed, now mingled with the billows of sounds which swayed and surged over the field.

Everything now depended upon the regiments and batteries which the genius of Rosecrans had massed along the turnpike to receive the enemy when he should emerge from the woods in pursuit of our broken and flying battalions. Suddenly the rout became visible and crowds of ten thousand fugitives, presenting every phase of wild and uncontrollable disorder, burst from the cedar thickets and rushed into the open space between them and the turnpike. Of them all, perhaps not a half-dozen members of the same regiment could have been found together. Thick and fast the bullets of the enemy fell amongst them. Scores of them were shot down, but still the number constantly increased by reason of the fresh crowds which burst out every moment from the thickets.

It was with the greatest difficulty that some of the regiments which had been massed together as a sort of forlorn hope to wit stand, if possible, and drive back the victorious cohorts of treason, could prevent their ranks from being crushed and broken by the mass of fugitives. With calm courage Gen. Crittenden awaited the coming storm. As he cast his eye over the grand array which had mustered to repel the foe, he already felt himself master of the situation. At last the long lines of the enemy emerged from the woods, rank behind rank, with a demoniac yell, intending to strike terror into the souls of the Yankees, who stood before them and charged with fearful energy almost to the very muzzles of the cannon whose dark mouths yawned upon them. A dazzling sheet of flame burst from the ranks of the Union forces. An awful roar shook the earth. A crash rent the atmosphere, and the foremost line of the rebel host

was literally swept from the field. It seemed to melt away like snow-flakes before the flame. Then both armies were enveloped in a vast cloud of smoke, which hid everything from the eye.

In the still visible ground between the turnpike and railroad the tumult was redoubled. Not knowing what would be the result of the strife raging under the canopy of smoke that concealed the combatants, the flight of those in charge of the wagons and ambulances became more rapid and disordered. Thousands of fugitives from the broken right wing mingled with the teams, and frequently the mass of men, horses and wagons would be crushed to the ground together. Every conceivable form of dreadful missile whizzed, whirled and burst among the crowd. Terror and dismay reigned. The uncontrollable and disordered mass rushed down as fast as possible toward the river, into which they plunged, pushing and struggling to the other side. The combat under that great cloud of smoke was somewhat similar to that in the woods. No one knows exactly what occurred. There was a shout, a charge, a rush of fire, a recoil, and then for a time everything disappeared. For ten minutes the thunder of battle burst forth from the clouds and when our battalions advanced, they found no rebels between the woods and the turnpike, except the dead, dying and disabled. There were hundreds of these and their blood reddened the ground. Since the annihilation of the Old Guard at Waterloo, probably there has not been an instance of so great slaughter in so short a time as during these repulses at Murfreesboro.

The rebel left was now thoroughly repulsed. Our troops emboldened by their success, pushed after them into the woods, driving them back in turn, over a considerable portion of the ground which we at first occupied. The roar of artillery sounded further and further off, as different batteries moved on slowly after the retreating foe. It was nearly 4 o'clock when Hardee was repulsed and all immediate danger in that quarter was over. He had succeeded in defeating the right, but did not gain the rear.

While the battle was raging on the right, half a dozen pieces of artillery belonging to Palmer's division kept up a continual fire on the rebel lines in the direction of Murfreesboro, in order to prevent an advance from that quarter. The division of the rebel general Wilders happened to be just in range of these cannon. Here he had been stationed by Hardee in readiness to charge upon Palmer's division at a proper time. The position was a most uncomfortable one, as at every discharge of the artillery some of Wilders' men bit the dust. Goaded almost to madness by this slaughter of his helpless men, the rebel leader ordered a charge. His men advanced with great impetuosity; but their recklessness was of no avail against the few proud regiments that stood in the way, and the desperate assailants withdrew at last; their loss must have been fearful, as they called it the bloodiest struggle of the day.

There was now a lull in the storm. Scarcely a volley of musketry or a boom of cannon was heard for three quarters of an hour. Some hoped that the bloody scenes had ended for the day; but the rebel leaders, disappointed by their failure to penetrate our camp by way of the right wing, were preparing for a blow at the centre. All reserves were attached to the centre of their army under Polk. Bragg in person placed himself at the head of the columns. The nature of the ground in this part of the field was such that every movement of either army could be distinctly seen. The open fields toward Murfreesboro were smooth enough for a holiday parade ground.

A fierce cannonading up the turnpike announced the coming onset. It came on in magnificent order, and stretched away diagonally across a great sloping field. At a sufficient interval another deployed into the open ground parallel with the first, and ere the former battalions were engaged, a third line of battle came forth. It seemed as though our feeble troops in that direction would be crushed by the weight of those immense masses; but Rosecrans had detected the rebel design even before their front line had appeared in view. The least exhausted troops of the left and centre were hurried forward in double quick time to combat this new effort of the enemy; and even from the extreme left a brigade was brought over to take part in the defense. The rebels rushed up to the very muzzles of our cannon, hurled their muskets at the heads of our artillery men, and even shouted demoniacally when their hearts were pierced by bullets and they tumbled to the earth while endeavoring to take another step in advance.

The same formidable array of batteries and battalions again confronted the foe as that upon which the violence of Hardee's force had spent itself, and similar results followed. Almost simultaneously a sheet of fire leaped forth from each of the opposite lines. For a few minutes both stood like walls of stone, discharging their muskets into each other's bosoms. Then the rebels attempted to charge; but a storm of lead and iron hail burst forth into their faces and all around them, sweeping them down. If once the soldiers of the Union wavered before this fiery onset, it was only for a moment, and in forty minutes from the time the first rebel line marched forth, all three had been dashed in pieces and the survivors of the conflict were flying in wild confusion over the slope or were disappearing in the dense woods.

The battle was now over until early the next morning. The rebels continued the fire of cannon from the direction of Murfreesboro,

as though in angry protest against their repulse. When this ceased there was silence all over the field.

The battle was renewed on Thursday, Jan. 1st, at day break, but the enemy, it is said, would not retire nor give way till afternoon, when the Federal artillery received a supply of ammunition, and then a more destructive fire was opened upon their lines, which made them waver and fall back, Gen. Thomas pressing their center and Gen. Crittenden advancing against their left. In the course of the afternoon there was considerable maneuvering by both armies for position.

There was desperate fighting on Friday the 2d inst. The enemy made a bold but unsuccessful assault on the Federal center in the forenoon. They advanced against Gen. Bentley's brigade, and after a desperate struggle drove it across the river. The result of that day's fighting was, however, in favor of the Federal arms. Gen. Rosecrans succeeded in establishing his left on the east bank of the river; the center at night held an advanced position, and the right had recovered most of the ground lost on Wednesday.

On Saturday the 3d it rained incessantly all day long and in the night, during the storm the enemy is reported to have attacked the Federal troops in their rifle pits along the entire line, and made another desperate attack on the center, resulting in their being driven back across Stone's River. During that night, Gen. Rosecrans, in his announcement of the retreat of the enemy, says he withdrew his left wing from the east side of the river, which occupied his time till four in the morning, and at seven it was announced that the enemy had fled, which report proved true. It is said they took with them all their stores, leaving nothing of value behind them.

An ammunition train having arrived during the night, Sunday the 4th was spent in distributing ammunition to the several corps and divisions, in burying the dead and caring for the wounded; and on Monday the 5th, Murfreesboro was occupied by Gen. Rosecrans, and the pursuit of the enemy commenced.

There are various reports as to the extent of the Federal loss. Some of the correspondents estimate the number of killed and wounded at about ten thousand, including several Generals, nineteen Colonels, and a large percentage of other officers. Five thousand prisoners were taken by the enemy, as admitted, which nearly corresponds with the report made by them of the sanguinary conflict, which has not been surpassed by any which have transpired during the war in fierceness and obstinacy, nor exceeded in casualties, according to the number of men engaged. The contending armies are said to have been about equal in force and number, and the loss in killed and wounded were about the same on each side. It is not known which suffered most, but the enemy took more prisoners, as reported, than they lost.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS ITEMS.

There was a great Negro celebration at Norfolk, as per report, on New Year's day, in which some four thousand "persons of African descent," of that class of "colored people" commonly called contrabands, a term used to designate slaves who have escaped from their masters, marched in procession carrying the "stars and stripes," preceded by a band of music, cheering loudly the while for the downfall of slavery. The display made by those descendants of Ham is said to have created much excitement. It must have been a demoniacal demonstration.

On the night of the first instant, an extensive fire is reported to have occurred in New York City, destroying property to the amount of some two hundred thousand dollars.

The steamer Monitor, which acquired so much renown in her conflict with the Merrimac, is reported to have foundered near Cape Hatteras, on the night of the 30th of December, and sunk in forty-five fathoms of water. Two officers and thirty-eight men are said to have gone down with the vessel. It is reported that the steamer having her in tow has not been heard from and is supposed to be lost.

Mr. Isaac N. Cook, a Paymaster of the Army, as has recently been discovered, is a defaulter to the government, to the amount of nearly half a million of dollars, which he has lost by gambling. The dishonesty and corruption of many of the Paymasters, Commissaries, Quartermasters and other officers

in the employ of the government, if reports be true, of which no doubts are entertained, exceeds anything ever before recorded in the history of nations.

The newspaper men of New York city invite proposals for the supply of three hundred thousand pounds of paper per week, for five years from the first of January inst., or as soon thereafter as the necessary arrangements can be perfected—the above amount being required by the Associated Press alone.

Burnside's army has been largely reinforced since the battle of Fredericksburg.

A memorial has been forwarded to Congress by the N. Y. national War Committee, praying that private armed vessels be authorized to go in pursuit of the rebel steamer Alabama.

The government proposes to employ portable mills for grinding wheat and corn on the march southward.

The English Cabinet, it is said, are furious at the publication of the mediatory documents by the French Government, and pronounce it a shabby diplomatic trick. It is probable the two governments will not again seek to come to an understanding on the American question.

Thurloew Weed has sold out of the Albany Journal and retired from the newspaper business, after an experience in it of forty years.

Among the resignations tendered to the President lately was that of Gen. Burnside, which Mr. Lincoln refused to accept.

The telegraphic line between Russia and San Francisco by way of Behring's Straits is under way—and portions of it in Russia are completed.

Want of coal is the last reason assigned for the detention of the great Western expedition to clear the Mississippi.

Two columns of Folsom granite, each weighing four and a half tons, have been landed lately at San Francisco, intended for the Broderick monument to be erected in Lone Mountain Cemetery.

Gen. McNeil, of the Missouri State Militia, whose surrender Jeff. Davis has demanded for shooting ten Confederates in that State, says that the stories to the effect that the old man Altman, for whose abduction he caused the ten guerilla parole-breakers to be executed, was returned to Palmyra alive and well the day after the execution, is a gross fabrication; on the contrary, Gen. McNeil has in his possession information from captured guerrillas that Altman was led out and shot the day after his capture. He was a peculiarly valuable man as a guide to the cavalry, having traveled over the whole country as a pedlar many years ago, and knew the hiding places of the guerrillas perfectly. As to the effect of the shooting, McNeil asserts that it has done more to quiet guerillas than all the fighting which has occurred from the beginning in North Missouri. He intended writing a letter to President Lincoln on the subject of retaliation—relating his experience for the benefit of the country—which, doubtless, he took care to do before the first day of January.

It is likely that the entire issue of the Bank of England will be withdrawn from circulation on account of the extensive and well-executed forgeries on it.

The next New York Assembly will be classified as follows: Democrats, 63; Union, 1; Union Democrats, 8; Union Republicans, 12; Republicans, 46.

The Army and Navy Gazette for December states that, owing to the utter demoralization, or diseased condition of the troops that were surrendered at Harper's Ferry—and since exchanged—it is reported that about five thousand of them will be mustered out of the service. The question incidentally arises here—if they are unfit for service in the army ranks, what under heaven are they fit for?

The U. S. Attorney General, Hon. Edward Bates, has recently decided that, under the 3d section of the act of July 14, 1862, chap 166, the mother of a deceased soldier "is entitled to a pension, whether she be married or be a widow, provided she was dependent upon him for support, in whole or in part; and that whether she was so dependent or not, and how far, is a question of fact, to be decided in each case by evidence."

It is the general opinion that the army of the Potomac will go to winter quarters, with the Rappahannock as the line of defense. For general comfort Sibley tents are to be raised over circular rows of stakes planted in the earth, and plastered with clay, making comfortable quarters, easily warmed by stoves.