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the Battle of Stone River

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS AND  
EXPERIENCES CONCERNING THE BATTLE OF STONE RIVER \*\*\*

**Personal Recollections and Experiences**  
**CONCERNING THE**  
**Battle of Stone River.**

A Paper Read by Request before the Illinois Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal  
Legion of the U.S., at Chicago, Ill., Feb. 14, 1889.

**BY**

**MILO S. HASCALL,**

OF GOSHEN, INDIANA,

Formerly a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army, and Brigadier-General of Volunteers during the War of  
the Rebellion.

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Personal Recollections and Experiences Concerning the Battle of Stone River.

As will be perceived by the above caption to this paper, it is proposed to relate what happened to me, and what I observed during the battle alluded to, and might not inappropriately be styled "What I know about the battle of Stone River."

In doing so I shall not undertake to give a general account of the battle, but shall confine myself to that portion which came under my own observation, and to necessary inferences as to what happened elsewhere. In setting out it will be well to give a brief account of the history of the Army of the Cumberland, and its commanders, so far as I know, up to the time of the memorable battle which is the subject of this paper. My having been a cadet at West Point from June, 1848, to June, 1852, when I graduated in the same class with Sheridan, Stanly, Slocum, Crook, Bonaparte and others, whose names have since become so distinguished, and my service in the regular army subsequently till the fall of 1853, threw me in contact with, and was the means of my knowing personally, or by reputation, most, if not all the prominent characters on both sides, that were brought to the knowledge of the public by the War of the Rebellion.

This knowledge of the men in the army of those times served me well all through the war, as it was seldom I came in contact with an officer on the other side, but what I knew all his peculiar characteristics, and idiosyncrasies. For illustration of this idea, as we were approaching Atlanta, my division had the advance of the Army of the Ohio the morning we came in sight of the city. My

advance guard captured a rebel picket post, and one of the men captured, had a morning paper from Atlanta, in which was Johnston's farewell order to his troops, and Hood's order assuming command. I had been three years at West Point with Hood, he having graduated in 1853, in Schofield's class. I knew Hood to be a great, large hearted, large sized man, noted a great deal more for his fine social and fighting qualities, than for any particular scholastic acquirements, and inferred, (correctly as the result showed) that Johnston had been removed because Davis, and his admirers, had had enough of the Fabian policy, and wanted a man that would take the offensive. I immediately sent word to Gen. Sherman, who, with his staff, was not far off, and when he came to the front, informed him of the news I had, and the construction I put upon it, and in consequence, an immediate concentration to resist an attack was made in the vicinity, where we were. It was none too soon, as Hood, upon taking command immediately moved out to Decatur with nearly his entire army, fell upon McPherson's corps, with the besom of destruction, killing the gallant McPherson early in the engagement, and with his vastly superior force, beating back the Army of the Tennessee so fast, that there is no telling what might have happened, had we not made the concentration we did, and been prepared to give them a tremendous enfilading fire as soon as they came opposite the flanks of the Army of the Ohio. It was my fortune to be stationed at Ft. Adams, Newport, Rhode Island, as soon as my furlough expired after graduating at the Military Academy, and there found Lieut. W.S. Rosecrans, (afterward the commanding general at Stone River), and from being stationed some ten months at the same post, became somewhat familiarly acquainted with him and his peculiarities. I had never met Gen. Don Carlos Buel, and knew but little of him, although he was a regular army man, until the fall of '61, upon my return from service in West Virginia, during the first summer of the war. I was then Colonel of the 17th Indiana, and was assigned to the command of a brigade in Nelson's Division of Buel's Army, which was then in and around Louisville, Ky., and whose purpose was a forward move against Nashville.

While Buel's Army, the Army of the Cumberland, was concentrating in and about Louisville, preparing for the forward movement, Gov. Morton, of Indiana, was frequently in Louisville, consulting with Gen. Buel, and offering suggestions as to army movements etc., and these, after a time, came to be regarded by Gen. Buel as meddling, and uncalled for, so much so, that he finally intimated to Gov. Morton that it would be as well for him to attend to his duties as Governor of Indiana, while he would attend to his as Commanding General of the forces in the field. It is important to mention this circumstance here, as it will be seen further on, that this matter had an important bearing upon Gen. Buel's subsequent career. It will not be necessary, nor appropriate in this paper, to enter into a detailed account of the operations of the Army of the Cumberland in its march upon, and capture of Nashville—in its subsequent march to Shiloh, and the part it took in that most unfortunate, not to say (in many respects) disgraceful battle to our army—in its subsequent advance upon Corinth, and its operations there—in its subsequent march into northern Alabama and the vicinity of Chattanooga, and the forced march back to Louisville, made necessary by Bragg's advance upon that city through the Sequatchie Valley, from Chattanooga. All this is known to the public, and the public has arrived at its own conclusions as to the merits or demerits of these various operations. It is not too much to say, however, that those of us who accompanied Gen. Buel in this remarkable march and counter-march, and particularly those who had important commands during the same, had ample opportunity to arrive at intelligent conclusions as to the merits and demerits of the man. It may be inferred from what has already been said that, Gen. Buel was not particularly popular with political soldiers, newspaper correspondents, and others who were carrying on the war from safe distances in the rear. He was eminently and emphatically a soldier, with no ambition or expectations outside the line of his duty, and with honor and integrity so entirely above suspicion, that the camp follower and money getter did not presume to even enter into his presence. Notwithstanding all this, by the time of the return of the Army of the Cumberland to Louisville, though that army had then performed services that justly entitled it to the lasting gratitude of the country, and notwithstanding its eminent commander enjoyed, so far as I knew, the entire confidence of the officers and men in regard to his loyalty, patriotism and ability, yet there had sprung up a fire in the rear party that was constantly impugning his loyalty, his ability, and his fitness to command, and demanding his removal. In the light of what has already been said, it can now be seen whence, and from what source this hue and cry proceeded.

On account of a contemporaneous popularity that Gen. Rosecrans had achieved about that time, at the battle of Iuka, there arose a demand in the press that Gen. Buel be superseded in the command of the Army of the Cumberland by that officer. As I have said, my acquaintance with Gen. Rosecrans previous to his assuming command of the Army of the Cumberland, had been confined to the ten months I had been stationed with him at Newport, R.I., in '52-3.

My recollections of him were not such as to inspire me with confidence in him as the proper person to be placed in command of an army. At that time he seemed to be a great enthusiast in regard to the Catholic Church; seemed to want to think of nothing else, talk of nothing else, and in fact do nothing else, except to proselyte for it and attend upon its ministrations. No night was ever so dark and tempestuous, that he would not brave the boisterous seas of Newport Harbor to attend mass, and no occasion, however inappropriate, was ever lost sight of to advocate its cause; in fact, he was what would nowadays be called most emphatically a crank on that subject, and might not inappropriately be considered a one-ideaed man lacking in the breadth and poise, so necessary to success in the command of an army in the field. While Buel's Army was in Louisville getting reinforcements and preparing to renew operations against Bragg, I obtained a few days leave of absence and had no end of inquiries on my way home and after arriving there, as to what I thought of the propriety and necessity of relieving Buel. I uniformly replied that as

far as the Army was concerned there was not that I knew of, any want of confidence in Buel, but on the other hand, nothing but the most sincere confidence and respect. That the only reason that could be assigned was the want of confidence that the fire in the rear might have caused in the country at large, and that even if this was thought to be necessary, it would be very bad policy to substitute Rosecrans in his stead. How near correct I was in this estimate the public is now prepared to judge. Of course the possibility of Buel's removal dispirited him, and perhaps inspired some of the officers under him, that might by possibility be selected to succeed him, with a desire that such might be the case. At all events, shortly after the army again took the offensive, the notorious and disastrous affair at Perryville took place, in regard to which it was charged at the time by Gen. Buel, and believed by others, that it was brought on by Gen. A. McD. McCook separating himself more from the body of the army than his orders justified, and beyond supporting distance, in order that an engagement might be brought on, in which, if successful, he might claim the sole credit, and thereby supersede Buel in command. However this may be, this engagement was the culminating affair in Buel's career. The blame was (as I think) unjustly attached to him, and he was relieved of his command, and Gen. W.S. Rosecrans appointed in his place. After this battle, the Army resumed offensive operations against Bragg and in due time arrived in Nashville, when offensive operations were for a time suspended, in order to get supplies forward, and put the army in shape for active, and if possible, decisive operations. During the weeks that we thus lay encamped about Nashville I had frequent opportunities to see Gen. Rosecrans and observe his manner, characteristics and surroundings and had hoped to be enabled to form a more favorable opinion of the man and his fitness for the high position to which he had been called than I had theretofore entertained. I was sorry, however, to be forced to the conclusion that my estimate of the man had been even more favorable than the facts would justify. His head seemed to have been completely turned by the greatness of his promotion. Instead of the quiet dignity, orderly and business methods that had formerly obtained at the headquarters of the Army, the very reverse seemed to be the rule.

Having by this time surrounded himself, in addition to the usual staff and appliances ordinarily to be found at the headquarters of an army in the field, with a numerous coterie of newspaper correspondents, and Catholic priests, who seemed in his estimation to be vastly more important than anyone else about him, and laid in a good supply of crucifixes, holy water, *spiritus frumenti*, Chinese gongs, flambeaux, jobbing presses, printers' devils, javelins, white elephants, and other cabalistic emblems and evidences that a holy crusade was about to be entered upon, and having daily announced through his various newspaper correspondents, jobbing presses, and other means of reaching the public and the Confederate Army lying immediately in our front, exactly what was going on, one could but wonder at the sublime indifference of Bragg, and his Army remaining in the State of Tennessee, in the midst of preparations for their destruction such as these. As this magnificent and resplendent cavalcade of Holy, Oriental, and gorgeous splendor moved about from camp to camp during the weeks that we lay at Nashville making these gigantic and awe-inspiring preparations for the advance, every knee was bowed, and every tongue confessed, that Allah was great, and thrice illustriously great was this Savior that had been sent to us. All things though, however grand and glorious, must have an end, and it was finally announced during the last days of December, 1862, that the army was ready for a forward move. You will not be surprised to be informed after what has preceded, that it was my opinion that the Catholic officers having command in that army would fare well when the honors of the campaign came to be distributed. Accordingly, I made a prediction in writing that every one of these, consisting of Brig.-Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, Brig.-Gen. D.S. Stanly, Brig.-Gen. James S. Negley, and Capt. James St. Claire Morton, would all be promoted entirely regardless of what the fortunes of war might have in store for them. This I did without the slightest feeling of unkindness or jealousy towards these officers, but simply on account of my belief that the Commanding General was such a narrow-minded bigot in regard to Catholicism, that it was impossible for him not to allow considerations of this kind to control his estimate of men. We shall see how nearly correct I was in this estimate further on. At the time this campaign was entered upon the National Forces had not been divided into Army Corps and numbered. Each Army commander divided his army as to him seemed best. Rosecrans divided his into three grand divisions called the Right, Center, and Left, and each of these into three ordinary divisions of four brigades each, the Right, Center and Left commanded respectively by Generals A. McD. McCook, George H. Thomas and Thos. L. Crittenden.

At the time of this advance and for a long time previous thereto, I was commanding a brigade in Gen. Thos. J. Wood's division of the left wing. The advance movement all along the line finally commenced about the 26th day of December, 1862. The first day Palmer's division of the left wing had the advance and on the evening of that day, had reached the vicinity of Lavergne, having had some pretty sharp skirmishing in so doing. The next day by rotation Wood's division had the advance.

It was not the place of my brigade to lead the division that day, but I was specially requested to take the advance, however, as the progress made the day before had not been satisfactory. I consented to do so upon condition that the cavalry, which had been in advance the day before should be retired to the rear of my brigade ready to be brought into use should we succeed in routing the enemy, and should the topography of the country admit of the successful use of cavalry. I had seen so many disastrous results ensue from the use of squadrons of cavalry in advance of an army under such circumstances as we were advancing, that I did not want to run any such risks in addition to the ordinary and inevitable risks of such advances against an army in the field. The cavalry necessarily has to retire before any effective work can be done, and usually comes back pell mell with a lot of riderless horses, and creates infinitely more confusion,

consternation, and even danger to the advancing army, than anything the enemy would be likely to do at that stage of the operations.

Having thus arrived at the front and got the cavalry out of the way to the rear, I found the enemy securely lodged in the town of Lavergne, and masked from our view by the buildings, shrubbery and fences. My orders contemplated an immediate advance along the main pike toward Murfreesboro. Thus no opportunity was given for flanking them, and so compelling them to abandon the town. The country was open between my command and the town, and afforded no shelter whatever for the troops. I formed the brigade in two lines about 200 yards apart, with a strong line of skirmishers about the same distance in advance of the first line, with a section of artillery in the interval between the infantry lines. As these dispositions were about completed preparatory to ordering an advance of the line a heavy infantry fire was opened upon us from the buildings and cover the town afforded to the enemy, and their fire was taking effect even upon the first line of infantry back of the skirmish line. At this juncture I ordered the infantry to lie down, the artillery to open with shot and shell upon the town, and the heavy line of skirmishers to fix bayonets and on double quick to make the distance between them and the town; to be immediately followed by the main lines of infantry as soon as the skirmishers had reached the town. This movement was entirely successful; we soon had routed the enemy from the town, but had left some forty or fifty dead comrades behind us to be cared for by those in our rear.

As soon as we had driven the enemy beyond the town, we continued the same order with two regiments in line of battle about 200 yards apart to the left of the main pike, and two to the right in like manner, all preceded by a heavy line of skirmishers, and pushed forward with all possible dispatch. A heavy rain set in about the time we commenced the advance beyond the town, which continued all day, so the corn-fields and other plowed fields soon became ankle deep with mud. Nevertheless we pressed forward continuously. If we encountered the enemy in any considerable force, the skirmish line gradually slackened their progress until the main line came up with them. Artillery was brought forward and fired advancing along the road. In this manner we kept up an almost continuous advance, our dead and wounded being cared for by those in our rear. By night-fall we had made an advance of nearly eight miles, to Stewart's Creek. As we approached Stewart's Creek we discovered that the enemy had set the bridge over the same on fire. I immediately concentrated four pieces of artillery on a little eminence to the right of the road, and commenced shelling the enemy beyond the creek. Under the cover of this fire the infantry was ordered forward at double quick, and succeeded in subduing the flames before sufficient damage had been done to prevent the use of the bridge by our army. So rapid had been our advance that three companies of rebel cavalry that had been hovering on our left flank during the advance, were cut off before they reached the bridge, and were captured by us with all their horses and accoutrements. In the evening we were congratulated by all our superior officers for having accomplished a very satisfactory day's work.

This brought us up to the evening of the 27th of December. During the time between this and the afternoon of the 30th of the same month, all portions of our army had pressed forward along the different lines of march laid out for them, encountering the usual incidents of driving in the enemy's cavalry and outposts, until finally at that time our entire army had arrived along the left bank of Stone River, opposite the city of Murfreesboro, some two or three miles further on. Here we encountered the enemy in force and their fortifications were plainly visible all along opposite us on the right bank of the river, between it and the city of Murfreesboro, and here it was very evident Bragg intended to make his stand and accept the gauge of battle.

There was desultory firing all along the line during that memorable afternoon, but during that time our army was finally concentrated, McCook, with his three divisions on the right, Thomas, with his three in the center, and Crittenden, with his three on the left. The whole line, with the intervals for artillery and cavalry, occupying a distance of two or three miles, more or less. Crittenden's three divisions were formed, two divisions in line of battle, and one in reserve, as follows: Palmer's division on the right, Wood's on the left, and Van Cleve in reserve opposite the interval between Palmer's and Wood's, and each division consisting likewise of three brigades, were formed in like manner, two in line and one in reserve. In Wood's division Wagner's brigade was on the right, my own on the left, and Harker in reserve. This arrangement brought my brigade on the extreme left of the entire army. During that evening we were made acquainted with the plan of the attack which was to be made by our army under cover of the gray of the morning the following day, the memorable 31st day of December, 1862. This was for the left wing (Crittenden's) to cross Stone River—which was at that time fordable at all points for all arms of the service—and deliver a furious attack on the enemy's extreme right, this to be followed up by a wheel to the right by other portions of our army in case Crittenden was successful in his attack, until all portions of our army should become engaged and the battle become general all along the line.

This plan was well conceived, and might have worked well enough perhaps, if the enemy had waited for us. The same mistake (or a similar one rather) was made here that was made by Grant at Shiloh, only the latter was much more faulty. In that case Grant was moving his army up the Tennessee River to Savannah, the object being to attack Beauregard, then at Corinth, some twenty miles from Savannah, as soon as he should have made a junction with Buell's army, then at Nashville, Tenn., and which was to march from that place to Savannah. Grant's army proceeding by boats, arrived at Savannah by detachments first, and should have all been landed on the side of the river toward Grant's reinforcements, instead of on the side toward the enemy—unless he considered from the time he landed, anything more than a picket force of cavalry to

keep him advised of the enemy's movements on the side toward them—that he had enough to successfully cope with him. If he thought the latter, he should have been with his troops on the side of the river toward the enemy instead of eight miles below on the other side. Thus the most elementary principles of grand tactics and military science, that, in case two armies are endeavoring to concentrate with a view of delivering an attack on a superior force of the enemy, the inferior force nearest the enemy, should be careful to oppose all natural obstructions, such as rivers, mountains, heavy forests, impassable marshes, between it and the enemy until a junction can be made. In this case the detachments of Grant's army were allowed to land on the side toward the enemy, select their locations as best they could without instructions or concert of action of any kind, and this within fifteen to eighteen miles of the enemy in force, in the enemy's country, where it was known to all that he had daily and hourly opportunity from the citizens who fell back before our forces, to find out all the time the exact locations and strength of Grant's and Buel's armies, respectively. Under circumstances like these, the merest tyro in military knowledge ought to have known that an experienced, able officer, such as Beauregard was known to be, would not wait for the concentration, before anticipating the attack. So it was no surprise to any one except the troops on that side the river towards Corinth, and possibly to Grant, then at Savannah, that on that fatal Sunday morning in April, 1862, when Grant had got sufficient troops on that side of the river to make it an object for Beauregard to destroy or capture them, and when Buel's advance had approached within twenty to twenty-five miles of Savannah, that Beauregard determined upon an attack, and declared he would crush or capture the troops on that side, and water his horse in the Tennessee river that night, and that but for the timely arrival by forced marches of Buel's advance of two divisions on the field about four o'clock that afternoon, he would undoubtedly have executed his purpose. If Buel had been guilty of such blundering (not to call it by any worse name than this) it would have been impossible to make the country at the North believe that he did not meditate its destruction. For this blunder Grant was promptly relieved of his command, by the proper authorities, and it was many years afterwards, before anyone was found, who did not think this was very moderate punishment, under such circumstances. The fault in the case under consideration differs in kind, but not in its disastrous effects upon our cause and our army.

The right of our army at Murfreesboro, judging from what happened (and as I said at the outset, when I don't know personally what happened, I speak from necessary inference) seemed to think that inasmuch as our plan of battle contemplated an attack by the extreme left, to be followed up by them subsequently during the day, that they had nothing to do at that early hour in the morning, but to keep a picket force out, send their artillery horses to a distant point for water, stack their arms, and get breakfast. They did not seem to think possibly Bragg might have plans of his own, and that our attack might be anticipated, and that our right might receive a desperate attack while our left was preparing to deliver one. This, as you all know, was what happened, and you all know its disastrous results.

Current reports at the time were to the effect that the right was found when the attack came upon them in the condition already described, and the prompt manner in which they were hurled from the field, corroborates this view of the case. This, of course, caused the troops to their left to be immediately out-flanked, and no resistance, to amount to anything, from that portion of our line could be expected under such circumstances. How much Gen. Rosecrans and his staff are properly to blame for the state of things existing on the right at the time of the attack, I have no means of knowing, and do not undertake to say but that it was the prime cause of the very serious disaster to our arms, and to the prestige of our army that happened at that battle, there can be no doubt or chance for two opinions. How the battle raged, and what happened, so far as I then knew, I cannot better describe than by extracting from my official report of that day's proceedings, made on the 6th of January, following, and which I do as follows:

HEADQUARTERS 1ST BRIGADE, 1ST DIV'N, LEFT WING, NEAR  
MURFREESBORO', TENN., Jan. 6, 1863.

*Capt. M.P. Bestow, A.A.A.G.:*

Sir: I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of my brigade, (formerly the 15th Brigade, 6th Division, but under the new nomenclature, 1st Brigade, 1st Division, left wing) on the eventful 31st of December, 1862.—During the night of the 30th I had received notice through Gen. Wood, our division commander, that the left wing, Crittenden's corps, would cross Stone river and attack the enemy on their right. My brigade was posted on the extreme left of our entire line of battle and was guarding and overlooking the ford over which we were to cross. On the morning of the 31st heavy firing was heard on the extreme right of our line, (McCook's corps) but as they had been fighting their way all the distance from Nolensville as we had from Lavergne, no particular importance was attached to this, and I was getting my brigade into position, ready to cross as soon as Gen. Van Cleve's division, which was then crossing, was over. All this time the firing on the right became heavier, and apparently nearer to us, and our fears began to be aroused that the right wing was being rapidly driven back upon us. At this juncture Gen. Van Cleve halted his division and the most terrible state of suspense pervaded the entire line, as it became more and more evident that the right was being driven rapidly back upon us. On and on they came till the heaviest fire was getting nearly around to the pike leading to Nashville, when General Rosecrans appeared in person, and ordered me to go with my

brigade at once to the support of the right, pointing toward our rear, where the heaviest fire was raging. Gen. Van Cleve's division and Col. Harker's brigade of our division received the same order. I at once changed the front of my brigade to the rear, preparatory to starting in the same direction, but had not proceeded more than 200 yards in the new direction before the fugitives from the right became so numerous, and the fleeing mule-teams and horsemen so thick, that it was impossible for me to go forward with my command without its becoming a confused mass. I therefore halted, and awaited developments. Gen. Van Cleve and Col. Harker not meeting with so much opposition pressed forward and got into position beyond the railroad, ready to open on the enemy as soon as our fugitives were out of the way. They soon opened fire, joined by some batteries and troops belonging to the center (Gen. Thomas' corps) and Estep's battery of my brigade, and after about an hours' fighting along this new line, during which time I was moving my command from point to point, ready to support any troops that most needed it. The onslaught of the enemy seemed to be in a great measure checked, and we had reasonable probability of maintaining this line. During all this time my men were exposed to a severe fire of shot and shell from a battery on the other side of the river, and several men were killed. About this time an aid of Gen. Palmer's came galloping up to me, and said that unless he could be supported his division would give way. Palmer's division formed the right of Gen. Crittenden's line of battle on the morning of the 31st. After consulting with Gen. Wood he ordered me to send a regiment to support Gen. Palmer. Accordingly I sent the 3d Kentucky regiment, commanded by Lieut. Col. Sam'l McKee. Before the regiment had been ten minutes in its new position, Capt. Kerstetter, my Adjutant General, reported to me that Col. McKee had been killed and the regiment badly cut up. I therefore moved with the other three regiments of my command to their relief. The line they were trying to hold was that part of our original line of battle lying immediately to the right of the railroad, and forming an acute angle with the same. This portion of our original line, about two regimental fronts, together with two fronts to the left held by Colonel Wagner's brigade, was all of our original line of battle but what our troops had been driven from; and if they succeeded in carrying this they would have turned our left, and a total route of our forces could not then have been avoided. Seeing the importance of the position, I told my men that it must be held even if it cost the last man we had. I immediately sent in the 26th Ohio, commanded by the gallant Major Wm. H. Squires, to take position on the right of the 3d Kentucky, and support it, and dispatched an aid for the 18th Indiana battery to come to this point and open on the enemy. No sooner had the 26th Ohio got in position than they became hotly engaged, and the numerous dead and wounded that were immediately brought to the rear told how desperate was the contest. The gallant Lieut. McClellan of that regiment was brought to the rear mortally wounded, and expired by my side in less than five minutes from the time the regiment took position. Still the fight went on, and still brave men went down. The 3d Kentucky, now reduced to less than one-half its original number, with ten officers out of its fourteen remaining ones, badly wounded, was still bravely at work. In less than ten minutes after the fall of Lieut. Col. McKee, the gallant Major Daniel R. Collier, of that regiment, received two severe wounds, one in the leg and one in the breast. Adjutant Bullitt had his horse shot from under him, but nothing could induce either of them to leave the field. Equally conspicuous and meritorious was the conduct of Major Squires and Adjutant Franklin, of the 26th Ohio. Major Squires' horse was three times shot through the neck; nevertheless, he and all his officers stood by throughout and most gallantly sustained and encouraged their men.

Estep's battery came up in due time, and taking a position on a little rise of ground in the rear of the 26th Ohio, and 3d Kentucky, opened a terrific fire of shot and shell over the heads of our infantry. About one hour after the 26th Ohio got into position, this terrible attack of the enemy was repulsed, and they drew back into the woods, and under cover of an intervening hill, to reform their shattered columns and renew the attack. I now took a survey of the situation, and found that along the entire line to the right and left of the railroad, which had not yet been carried by the enemy, I was the only general officer present, and was therefore in command, and responsible for the conduct of affairs. Col. Hazen, commanding a brigade in Gen. Palmer's division, was present with his brigade to the left of the railroad. Col. Gross, commanding another brigade in the same division, was also present with what there was left of his brigade, and most nobly did he co-operate with me, with the 6th and 25th Ohio to the right of the railroad, while Col. Wagner, commanding the 2d brigade, 1st division, (left wing) nobly sustained his front, assisted by Col. Hazen to the left of the railroad. I now relieved the 3d Kentucky regiment, who were nearly annihilated, and out of ammunition, with the 58th Indiana regiment of my brigade, commanded by Col. Geo. P. Buell; and this being a much larger regiment than the 3d Kentucky, filled up the entire space from where the right of the 3d Kentucky rested, to the railroad. I then threw forward the right of the 6th Ohio regiment of Col. Gross' brigade, which was on the right of the 26th Ohio, so that its line of battle was more nearly perpendicular to the railroad, and so its fire would sweep the front of the 26th Ohio, and 58th Indiana,

and supported the 6th Ohio with Estep's battery on a little eminence to its right, and brought the 97th Ohio, Col. Lane, from Wagner's brigade, to still further strengthen the right. These dispositions being made, I galloped a little to the rear, and found Gen. Rosecrans, and called his attention to the importance of the position I was holding, and the necessity of keeping it well supported. He rode to the front with me, approved of the dispositions I had made, spoke a few words of encouragement to the men, cautioning them to hold their fire until the enemy had got well up, and had no sooner retired than the enemy emerged from the woods over the hill, and were moving upon us again in splendid style, and in great force. —As soon as they came in sight, the 6th and 26th Ohio, and Estep's battery opened on them, and did splendid execution; but on they came, until within 100 yards of our line, when Col. Buell, of the 58th Indiana, who had lost three men, but had not fired a gun, ordered his men to fire. The effect was indescribable; the enemy fell in winrows, and went staggering back from the effects of this unexpected volley. Soon, however, they came up again and assaulted us furiously for about one and a half hours, but the men all stood their ground nobly, and at the end of that time compelled the enemy to retire as before.

During the heat of this attack a heavy cross fire was brought to bear on the position I occupied, and Corporal Frank Mayer, of the 3d Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, in command of my escort, was shot through the leg, and my Adjt. General, Capt. Ed. R. Kerstetter, was shot through his coat, grazing his back. The regiments all behaved splendidly again, and the 58th Indiana won immortal honors. Lieut. Blackford, of that regiment, was shot dead, and several of the officers, including Capt. Downey and Alexander, badly wounded. Estep's battery was compelled to retire from the position assigned to it after firing a half dozen rounds, but it did terrible execution while there. The 6th and 26th Ohio did noble service, as did the 97th, but their own immediate commanders will no doubt allude to them more particularly. Thus ended the third assault upon our position. I should have remarked that the 100th Illinois, the other regiment composing my brigade, which was in reserve during the first engagement described above, had, under instruction of Col. Hazen, moved to the front on the left of the railroad, and taken up a position at right angles with the railroad, where they fought splendidly in all the actions that took place on the left of the road. There was no formidable attack made upon them, though they were almost constantly under fire of greater or less severity, particularly from shot and shell, and suffered quite severely in killed and wounded. Lieut. Morrison Worthington, of that regiment, was killed while gallantly sustaining his men, and six other commissioned officers, including Major Hammond, were wounded. Their operations being to the left of the railroad, in a wood, did not come so immediately under my personal observation, but their conduct, from Col. Bartleson down, was such as leaves nothing to be desired. The 58th Indiana having now been over three hours in action, and the 26th Ohio about four hours, were exhausted and very near out of ammunition. I therefore relieved the 58th Indiana with the 40th Indiana from Col. Wagner's brigade, and the 26th Ohio was relieved by the 23d Kentucky. There was now not more than an hour of the day left, and though the enemy was constantly maneuvering in our front, no formidable attack was made upon us, except with artillery. The enemy having been three several times repulsed in their attack on that position, seemed satisfied to keep at a respectful distance, and the sun set upon us, masters of the situation. We had sustained ourselves *and held the only portion of the original line of battle that was held throughout by any portion of our army*. To have lost this position would have been to lose everything, as our left would then have been turned also, and utter rout or capture inevitable.

During the evening of the 31st, I was officially notified that in consequence of the indisposition of Gen. Wood, and a wound received by him during the forenoon of that day, he was relieved of the command of the division, and that the same would devolve upon myself. I therefore turned over the command of the brigade to Col. Geo. P. Buell, of the 58th Indiana, and assumed command of the division. All of which is respectfully submitted.

MILO S. HASCALL, Brig. Gen. Vols., Com's Brigade.

ED. R. KERSTETTER, Capt. & A.A.G. (Official.)

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After the battle was over, during the evening, Colonel Harker's brigade that had gone to the assistance of the right, returned to where we had been in action during the day, and thus the division was once more together, and on this ground we did the best we could towards getting something to eat, and prepared to bivouac on the same ground for the night. About eleven o'clock that night, I was visited by Capt. John Mendenhall, Chief of Artillery on Gen. Crittenden's staff, and who belonged to the Regular Army of the United States, and a gentleman of first-class intelligence, and purity of character, and informed that since the cessation of hostilities for the night, a council of war had been held at Gen. Rosecrans' headquarters, by himself and his Grand Division Commanders, and that a general retreat to Nashville had been decided upon, and that

all except Gen. Crittenden concurred in the advisability of such movement, and he was overruled by the others, and that in pursuance of such determination, I was forthwith to send all the transportation of my division, except one wagon for each brigade, to the rear, and when the transportation was all under way, this was to be followed by a general retreat of our army to Nashville. Mendenhall said that Crittenden was very much incensed at the proposition for retreat; said his army was in position and on hand, and that if he were overruled and if a retreat was decided upon, that he would cross the river and retreat by way of Gallatin to Nashville. However, the retreat was decided upon, and the baggage had been sent to the rear as above directed, and we were laying on our arms awaiting the further order to retreat, when a very singular circumstance caused Rosecrans to change his mind, and conclude to fight it out where we were. A large number of our straggling, demoralized detachments in the rear of our army, being hungry and thirsty, had concluded to disobey orders, and make fire and try and get something to eat. One party would make a fire, another would go there to get a fire brand to start another, and when this became general along our rear, Rosecrans concluded the enemy had got in our rear, and were forming line of battle by torch lights, and hence withdrew the order for a general retreat. After this, about one o'clock, I was informed also by Capt. Mendenhall, that the retreat had been given up, and that I was ordered to fall back with my division about half a mile, and take up a position that would there be assigned me. Accordingly I did so, and in the morning found myself occupying a position with no advantages for offensive or defensive operations, and very much exposed to the enemy's fire, with no chance for returning it with any effect. The enemy were occupying the position I had fallen back from, and at that point concentrated a large number of pieces of artillery, with which, about nine o'clock in the morning, they opened upon us a tremendous artillery fire, under the cover of which I supposed their infantry would charge upon us, but for some strange reason or other, they did not do so. Desultory firing afterwards, was kept up during the day, until about three o'clock in the afternoon. In the meantime we had sent a division across the river to the left, which was occupying the high ground near where the enemy's right was resting originally. About three o'clock Breckenridge's troops, of the rebel army, fell furiously upon this division, and drove them rapidly from their position, on account of their superior numbers. At this juncture Crittenden ordered Mendenhall to concentrate his artillery on the bank of the river to our front and left, which he promptly did, and ordered me, with my division, to promptly cross the river in support of the division already there in retreat. Upon our arrival on the other side of the river, the furious fire from Mendenhall's artillery had checked the rebel advance, and the division over there turned upon their assailants, and with the assistance of my division, drove Breckenridge back to the position he had occupied before making the assault. The latter part of these operations were carried on in the darkness, and we slept upon our arms, amidst the dead and wounded. It had been raining hard all the night, and the river was rising very rapidly, so much so that if we had remained there until morning, there would have been danger that the river would become impassable, and the divisions been left there by themselves in the presence of the whole rebel army. Accordingly, about two o'clock at night, we were ordered to recross the river, and take up positions where we had been during the previous day. We arrived back there between that time and morning, thoroughly wet through, and completely jaded out, having had no sleep, and but little to eat during the previous forty-eight hours. Both armies continued after this during the third day, to occupy the positions they had on that morning. It was cold, wet, and very disagreeable weather; both armies were completely tired out, and seemed content to do nothing more than to engage in some desultory firing, and watch each other closely. On the morning of the fourth day, January 3, or rather, during the forenoon of that day, the stragglers from the right, during the first day's battle, who had not stopped in their flight until they reached Nashville, began to return in large numbers, in companies, and even regiments, and Bragg, observing this, concluded we were receiving large bodies of reinforcements from the north, and therefore concluded to fall back and give up the contest. He accordingly did so, and on the fourth day, January 4, he took possession of Murfreesboro without the firing of a gun. Thus ended the great battle of Stone River. We had not made a single attack during the whole time; were badly beaten and well nigh driven from the field the first day, and only saved from an ignominious retreat upon Nashville by the ridiculous misconception on the part of Rosecrans, already alluded to on the first night after the battle commenced. As it was, we lost all our transportation, by sending it to the rear, that night, preparatory for the retreat, the whole having been burned by the rebels at Lavergne, notwithstanding we were supposed to have some cavalry in our rear, under Gen. Stanley. Where it was at the time our transportation was being burned by the rebel cavalry, I have never heard.

Finally our fugitives from the first day's battle began to return, thereupon Bragg became very much frightened and beat a retreat, and we thus gained Murfreesboro. After this reports were written up to praise the men it had been determined upon in advance to promote, and these identical men that I had predicted would be favored, were promoted; one of them, St. Claire Morton, from Captain to Brigadier-General, while others, upon whom rested the heat and burden of the day, and who saved the army from utter annihilation, were not only not promoted, but in many instances not even mentioned. It was, for instance, Sheridan's fate to be early driven from the field, whether from his fault or not, it is not necessary to inquire. Enough for this occasion that it was so, and the facts of his subsequent career no more justify what was done for him on this occasion, than would the subsequent illustrious career of Gen. Grant justify his promotion for the terrible blunders committed by him concerning the most unfortunate battle of Shiloh.

In what I have said in this paper in regard to the Catholic Church, I do not wish to be understood as having any desire to say anything against that church, but simply to condemn the idea of making membership in that, or any other particular church, a necessary concomitant to



advancement, either in a military or civil capacity, under our government. Farther, in all that I have said nothing has been said in malice towards any officer or person, but simply that that criticism so necessary to the establishment of right and justice in regard to the late war may be freely indulged in, whether it affect the highest officer, or the lowest private that offered his life in defense of his country. It will be seen that my estimate of the fitness of Gen. Rosecrans to command an army was not enhanced by his career during and preceding the battle of Stone River. When disaster came to the right, he should have given his attention personally to that, and lent the magic of his personal presence to rallying the fleeing troops from that division, in place of going to the extreme left himself—instead of by a staff officer—for ordering the movement of troops in that direction. When the whole affair was over, and quiet restored, I made an application to be transferred to another army on account of want of confidence in him as the commander of an army in the field. This I supposed would cause my arrest, and give an opportunity for me to demonstrate the great cause that existed for my apprehensions, but instead of doing this, he returned my application endorsed that he could not spare the services of so useful an officer as myself, and that there would be no forward movement of the army for six months, and detailed me to proceed to Indianapolis, Ind., to superintend the work of returning deserters from Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Just before my leaving Murfreesboro for Indianapolis we saw Bragg's telegraphic account to Richmond, of the first day's proceedings. It was as follows: "This morning, under cover of the darkness, we attacked the enemy on his extreme right, and have routed him from every portion of his line except upon his extreme left, where he has successfully resisted us." As I left there was a proposition started in Crittenden's command to raise money to present Bragg a sword for making the above truthful statement of the first days operations. While at Indianapolis, I was, at the request of Gen. Burnside, transferred by the War Department, to the army of the Ohio and given the command of a division in that army. The next that we heard of Gen. Rosecrans was at the battle of Chickamauga, and that was the last we heard of him in a military way, and all can now see how much cause there was for the apprehensions I entertained. This was not the first instance that great unfitness achieved high rank in our armies and it was quite common for great merit to be entirely unrewarded, and indeed entirely unknown. But time is a great healer, and let us hope that honest merit will in the end get its recognition, trusting in the truthfulness of the idea that

"Ever the world goes round and round,  
And ever the truth comes uppermost,  
And justice shall be done."

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS AND  
EXPERIENCES CONCERNING THE BATTLE OF STONE RIVER \*\*\*

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