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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BUGLE BLASTS \*\*\*

## **BUGLE BLASTS,**

**READ BEFORE THE**

**OHIO COMMANDERY**

**OF THE**

**MILITARY ORDER**

**OF THE**

**Loyal Legion of the United States,**

**BY COMPANION**

**WILLIAM E. CRANE,**

**Late Captain 4th O. V. C. and A. A. Adjt.-Gen.**

**NOVEMBER 5, 1884.**

**CINCINNATI:  
PETER G. THOMSON,  
1884.**

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## **BUGLE BLASTS.**

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To one who occupied a very small space in the War of the Rebellion—one who filled but a modest position among those who sought to protect the Nation's honor and life—it is a matter of difficulty, if not hazard, to attempt to enlighten, or even entertain, such a body as that to whom this paper is addressed. Certainly no attempt will be made, in this case, to *enlighten*. If any thing new is furnished that shall also prove interesting, the end will be subserved. There are those among us, members of Ohio Commandery, who contributed

largely to the grandeur, the magnificence, the glory of that army of the Union from which this Order sprang. There are those among us who *made* pages, aye, chapters, of history where great deeds are emphasized in blood; deeds that "throbbed the Nation's heart." And this history is not for a day; not for our time alone. It will go on down the ages to be read by grand-children and their grand-children, who will point with pride to the illustrious achievements and say: "These were my ancestors who fought in that great war and did these glorious things!" What richer legacy can you hand down? This is *fame!* This is *glory!* And do not these come of honest ambition? But there are incidents, episodes, deeds that come under the observation only of the few—sometimes of the individual—which, little in themselves and seemingly inconsequential, help to make up the grand story. It is an old, old story now, but the story has become history. A full and true history of the late war has never been written—never will be. But little links can be picked up—even as we pick up battered bullets on old battle-fields—and these may be welded together to make a completer chain. And this is, perhaps, our duty, the duty of those who are permitted to enjoy the present. Let us also make it a pleasure.

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I call this paper "Bugle Blasts" simply because that seems as appropriate as anything. It refers to some incidents and experiences in the cavalry; exciting and sometimes thrilling to those engaged, if not interesting to him who hears the tale told.

Late in the winter of '62, when the movement on Fort Donelson was begun, Buell began his movement on Bowling Green. The Third Division had the advance and was commanded by General O. M. Mitchell, or "Star Mitchell" as he was called in those days. February 10th Mitchell broke camp at Bacon Creek, Kentucky, made a forced march to Bowling Green, driving the rebel Hindman before him, and on February 22d started for Nashville. The Fourth Ohio Cavalry, his advance regiment, was before Nashville on the evening of the 23d, and received from the Mayor the surrender of the city. The Third Division went into camp and the Fourth Ohio Cavalry was placed *eight miles* in the front, at the outposts, on the Murfreesboro pike.

The cavalry of Buell's army had not received that attention requisite for the most efficient service, and the Fourth Ohio was no exception. There were no carbines in the regiment—only sabers and some unreliable revolvers. One company, however (that of the writer's), was armed with Colt's revolving rifles. These had been secured, some weeks before, while the company was on special duty at Upton, Ky., by requisition on Louisville, accompanied by considerable diplomacy, etc.—the "etc" to be literally translated, and not given too liberal a construction. I say the company was *armed* with this formidable weapon. Perhaps it were better to say *loaded*. The horse certainly was loaded when the trooper mounted with this instrument slung on his back, clanking saber at his side, and pistol in holster. It was cruelty to add the canteen and haversack! But in those days we had no "S. P. C. A."

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About three o'clock in the afternoon of March 8th the Colonel came to our company headquarters and said he wanted the company to mount and go in pursuit of a body of rebel cavalry said to be in the neighborhood. Just as the order was issued an Orderly from Mitchell's headquarters rode up excitedly and reported that John Morgan had captured the regimental wagon-train, on its way out to camp with supplies, burned the wagons and taken off teamsters, horses, and mules. And this only one mile from camp—almost under our noses! Our Colonel's blood was up in an instant, and in stentorian voice he shouted, "Company C, turn out with your rifles!" This "*with your rifles*" had a flavor of business about it, and the response was not only quick, but nearly unanimous. Evidently, there was to be "music in the air," and there was an anxiety to have the rifles come in at the right moment with the Bass. Four other companies were ordered out. Then came the command, "Company C, forward with the rifles!" and we dashed forward up the pike toward Nashville. The report received was not a "grape-vine." Something near two miles from camp, in the middle of the pike, were the ruins of our wagon-train—some wagons still burning and some already in ashes. The teamsters and animals were gone and no signs of friend or foe.

As afterward learned, the attacking party were Lieut.-Col. Wood with a body of Mississippi cavalry and John Morgan's command. They had first quietly taken in the pickets and then made a dash, from the woods, on the train, capturing, with the teamsters, Capt. Braiden, an Aide of Gen. Dumont's. Gen. Mitchell himself barely escaped capture, having ridden along the pike about the same time. A halt was called and the road examined to ascertain which way the enemy had gone. The trace was found leading east through the woods. One Company was sent back to get re-enforcements, and, with them, to strike into the timber from the regimental camp to try and intercept the raiders. The original party, headed by Col. Kennett, dashed into the woods, and then occurred a chase the parallel to which has seldom been seen. "Forward!" was the word, and forward it was. The woods became a thicket, sometimes apparently impassable; but the horses, spurred by their riders, dashed at headlong speed through the trees, through the underbrush, under branches—thorns scratching the face and hands, projecting limbs tearing clothes and bruising bodies. Down hill and up hill, through marsh and bog, over logs and across streams, leaping obstacles, shouting, yelling, screaming, and hurrahing, away we went—mud and leaves flying and dead limbs crushing beneath horses' feet. Now the trail is lost and there is a halt to look for footprints. How much of a start the raiders have can not be known, but the trail must be fresh. Soon it is found and the horses gallop on as full of spirit as their wildly excited riders. When the tracks disappear in the forest leaves, the rebel course is now marked by plunder

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lost or cast aside—overcoats, canteens, saddles, blankets, the woods are full of them. Now and then an abandoned horse is seen. Finally, we strike a narrow pike, follow it a mile or so and learn that Morgan and Wood have divided their force, only the smaller part having taken the course we are pursuing. We were after Morgan and the main body, so turned back. It was precious time lost but the trail was again struck, where they had crossed the pike, and once more a plunge was made into the timber and cedars.

For miles the trees were so thick, and the foliage so dense, that it became impossible to ride other than single file; but, retarded as was our speed, the chase became hotter and more exciting than ever. The Yankee blood of the hunters was at fever heat and they determined to run the game to cover. The sight of an abandoned horse (and the hard-pressed enemy was now leaving his own as well as our animals) was the signal for a yell that the pursued might have heard and trembled at miles away. Then spurs were clapped into horses' flanks to urge them still faster on; and thus the column—if column that could be called which column was none—swept, dashed, plunged onward. Occasionally a trooper was dismounted by a projecting limb, and as he clambered out of the way, the sympathetic cry was wafted back from some comrade, "Say, what infantry *rigiment* does you'ns belong to?"

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Now the Colonel's voice rings shrilly through the forest with the same old talismanic "forward!" The refrain is taken up, sent back along the column until the rearmost rider hears and shouts a returning echo, "We are coming, father Abraham!" No cowardice there. No lagging behind from choice. Every man was straining nerve and muscle to get ahead. We were fast gaining on the enemy and they knew it, trembling at every shout wafted to their ears. They grew desperate, dug the rowels into their horses, cursed their prisoners, threatened them, shot at them to make them keep up, and wounded one poor fellow to the death. These facts were gleaned afterward.

We had gained rapidly and thought them almost within grasp. But "the best laid plans of mice and men, etc., etc." Desperation nerved them and they flew down the pike, scattering the stones behind. But we ran them into the net prepared. The detachment that had gone out later from camp struck the pike opportunely and received the enemy warmly as we drove him into their arms. A brisk engagement followed, partly hand to hand. The fight was soon over, the enemy being routed, scattered and driven in every direction. At the onset Morgan, with his staff and a lot of blooded horses, broke away and escaped across Stone river. Our command being united and ready to move an inventory of affairs and effects was taken. The enemy left four dead on the field, four sound captives in our hands and two wounded. Of the ninety-four horses taken we recaptured seventy-five; of the forty-eight teamsters, thirty-one, and also Capt. Braiden. A number of rebels were wounded, but not seriously, and escaped. One of the two wounded prisoners—Warfield by name—was related to one of the most prominent and wealthy families of Cincinnati. The other was a Mississippian, by the name of Love. The writer visited the two in the regimental hospital that night. Love had a terrible wound, and knew it was mortal, but his last breath was expended in cursing and execrating the "Yankees" in the most horrible and vile language tongue could utter.

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The chase being over, the command returned—all except the Company with the rifles, who were to continue the pursuit. Pushing on again we struck the Murfreesboro pike, near Lavergne, and got on the heels of one detachment, but these, knowing the country, broke for the cedars and escaped. We saw no more of them and returned to camp at 8 P. M., after a ride of about thirty miles, part of this on a keen run.

About a month after the incidents just related, the Fourth Ohio Cavalry had the honor of capturing Huntsville, Ala., the "Queen City of the Mountains." About the middle of March, 1862, Gen. Mitchell's Division of Buell's army left Nashville and pushed south to Murfreesboro, thence to Shelbyville, following the rebel Johnston, who had destroyed all bridges behind him. From Shelbyville a rapid advance was made to Fayetteville, then a hot-bed of Secession. Turchin's Brigade, with Simonson's Battery and the Fourth Ohio Cavalry, had the van. The Fourth broke camp early that morning, April 9th, at the loyal town of Shelbyville, with a three o'clock reveille and timely "Boots and Saddles." Passing by the infantry and Simonson's guns, the regiment rode briskly on to Fayetteville, through the town, over the stone bridge at Elk river, and camped on the same spot where Gen. Jackson had camped fifty years before, in 1812, a spot convenient, pleasant, and *historic*. News of the victory at Corinth reached us on the 10th, and there was enthusiastic joy and joyful enthusiasm throughout the camp. The command set out at once for Huntsville, the cavalry leading. Our route lay along a circuitous dirt road and through a mountainous country. Twelve miles brought us to the State line, marked by a high pole bearing the tattered remnants of a rebel flag.

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Now we are in Alabama. The plantations stretch out in beautiful landscape and, as the innumerable negroes grin at us from every field and fence, we are forcibly reminded that we are "in the land of cotton." Halting at sundown to feed and await the remainder of the division, the cavalry again moved on rapidly and went into bivouac at 10 P. M. At two in the morning a detail of picked men was made to ride across the country and tear up the track on the Memphis & Charleston Railroad leading east from Huntsville. Pickets were also thrown out to intercept all travel to and from the town. At four o'clock on the morning of April 11th the artillery and cavalry were in motion for Huntsville, eight miles away. Nearing town the battery galloped on to the front, the Fourth Ohio following close. It was a matter of all

importance that the place should be reached before any trains should leave; and when, two miles off, the whistle of a locomotive sounded on our ears, every thing was excitement and every horse put to its speed. Such a clatter never before awoke the echoes among those Alabama hills. Yonder curls the smoke and here comes the engine with but a single car, steaming eastward across the plain. Simonson wheels a gun, lets fly a solid shot, and the engine slackens speed, hesitates (as if to ask the meaning of all this), and puffs quickly on. A shell speeds after it but fails in its intent. However, the train can not escape altogether if our railroad wreckers have safely reached their trysting-place. The locomotive may be ditched and lost to us for service, but will hardly carry the news to Leadbetter, at Bridgeport, that the Yankees have come.

Company A has orders and in an instant a dozen troopers have dismounted, thrown down the stake-and-rider fence, and away goes the company across the plain in hot pursuit—horse-flesh vieing with steam! But the iron-limbed courser had the best bottom and whirled along amid a shower of bullets—escaping for the time, but only to become prey to the detachment up the road. Another whistle sounds and another train comes in sight. Simonson’s bull dog again barks—again ineffectually. A repeated effort is more successful, and a shell crashes through the cab. The cavalry company is on hand this time, and bang! bang! crack! crack! go the carbines and revolvers and the balls whistle about the engineer’s head and rattle against the cars. The train stops and the passengers, rebel soldiers and officers, leap to the ground and endeavor to escape. A few succeed, but the majority are taken. The train is boarded and brought back. Meanwhile the column dashes onward and goes whirling into Huntsville. At the station is another train just leaving, with troops who are going “on to Richmond.” A cocked pistol held at the engineer’s head has the effect of shutting off steam and the train is placed under guard. The regiment gallops up the street and through the town. Pickets are thrown out on all the roads.

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Black faces were at every door and window; blacks were at the gates, and blacks were on the streets; but the “Chivalry” had evidently deserted the place, except the few who viciously peered at us through the blinds, robed in white. Perhaps it was too early for *white folks*, and our call was untimely on that bright April morning—the clock had not yet struck six—and perhaps they were too high toned to suffer Yankees to look upon their faces. After reconnoitering the streets and gathering in a few wearers of the gray the regiment was apportioned to various duties.

Another train had just pulled in, all unconscious of the reception awaiting. This, too, was filled with soldiery from below, bound for Richmond—four officers and 180 privates. At one of the hotels a Major and three Captains were taken, and others at other points in town. The full result of the early morning’s work was 800 prisoners, 17 locomotives and a large number of cars. The locomotives themselves were of incalculable value, and more than paid for the expedition if there had been no other fruits; for they enabled Gen. Mitchell to push his troops rapidly in every direction and hurry forward supplies. Without them many of the results which soon followed could not have been accomplished.

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From the Sheriff the keys of the jail were demanded and a large number of prisoners, loyal Tennesseans mostly, were liberated. Some of these at once enlisted in the Union army. Huntsville was ours “and fairly won,” without a casualty on our side or loss of any kind. \* \* \*

In August, 1864, the army constituting “The Military Division of the Mississippi,” commanded by Gen. Sherman, lay in front of Atlanta. The effort to flank Hood out of his position had not been successful and Gen. Sherman announced a new plan of operations. In the new deal Gen. Thomas was assigned to the left, Schofield given the right, and Howard the center. Of the Cavalry, Gen. Garrard commanded the Second Division and Gen. Kilpatrick the Third. A raid of formidable proportions was projected on the Macon railroad, and Kilpatrick was to engineer this. Gen. Sherman had said, in a message to Thomas, Aug. 16th, “I do think our cavalry should now break the Macon road good.” This raid of Kilpatrick’s, though not as full in fruition as was hoped, was of great importance and is the subject of the following chapter. It was an undertaking brilliant in conception, thrilling in its experience, and deserving of historical record. Of the 2d Cavalry Division one Brigade was absent. The 1st and 2d Brigades traveled all night the 17th of August to Sand Town, where Kilpatrick was with the 3d Division. On the morning of the 18th the following circular was published.

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“HEADQUARTERS CAVALRY EXPEDITION,  
DEP’T CUMBERLAND,  
SAND TOWN, GA., Aug. 18, ’64.

Soldiers! You have been selected from the Cavalry Divisions of the Army of the Cumberland; you have been well organized, equipped, and rendered formidable, at great expense, to accomplish an object vital to the success of our cause. I am about to lead you, not on a *raid*, but on a deliberate and well combined attack upon the enemy’s communications, in order that he may be unable to supply his army in Atlanta. Two expeditions have already failed. We are the last Cavalry hope of the army. Let each soldier remember this and resolve to accomplish this, the great object for which so much is risked, *or die trying!*

At dark the two divisions (really, they were only *parts* of two divisions) moved southward. The expedition was designed to be a secret one, and there were no bugle blasts to awaken the echoes of the still night—bugle blasts that so thrill through the trooper's blood and nerve him for the mount, the march, or the fray.

The 3d Division had the advance, and with it was the 10th Wisconsin Battery of four pieces. The 2d had two sections of the "Chicago Board of Trade Battery." Quietly as all had been planned, the movement was already known in the rebel camp and our advance encountered an impeding force early in the march. These fell back as we advanced but continued harassing and delaying the column, and skirmishing was kept up all night, a bright moon rendering some aid to both sides.

Friday morning, the 19th, the 2d Division struck the Atlantic & West Point Railroad. Men from the advance division were already at work tearing up the track, and one regiment—the 1st Ohio—was detailed from the 2d Division to assist. A mile of track was soon destroyed. Meanwhile, the rear of the moving column (Minty's Brigade) was attacked by a force from the woods on the left with musketry and artillery. The fighting soon became heavy. The 1st Ohio was ordered up to Minty's relief, and a systematic attack made with good results, the enemy retiring from sight. The march was resumed, but the enemy again showed himself, and, selecting a good position on the flank, opened up a lively salvo of artillery, playing his pieces well. Shells screamed through the air over the moving column, and the 3d and 4th Ohio suffered seriously. Considerable time was consumed in brushing off this force, whose evident aim was to harass and not fight, but they were finally routed. From prisoners taken we learned that Ross' Cavalry Brigade was our principal opponent.

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A detachment of 400 men was now sent forward to Griffin to destroy the track there. The 2d Brigade of the 2d Division was ordered forward and, on the Jonesboro road, struck the enemy. Skirmishing continued nearly all day, the enemy falling back slowly and showing a disposition to impede our progress as much as possible. At Flint river a strong force was in position on the further bank and at the town of Jonesboro. Pressing them with energy and our artillery playing lively airs they were driven from their works, and we advanced across the bridge which they had attempted to burn. Moving into and through the town the depot was fired and the track destroyed.

The command now took a brief rest, having eaten nothing all day and not having slept for over twenty-four hours. Marching again at 11, the 2d Division passed south and reached the McDonogh road at daylight. At Pittsburgh again turned south toward the railroad. The first few miles developed nothing of interest, but, finally, during a temporary halt, the rear guard was attacked and the 1st Ohio sent back to its support. The enemy developed considerable strength and the 3d and 4th Ohio were hurried to the scene. A sharp engagement, but brief, followed; the opposing force was routed and the column again moved on—moved on to encounter something of a foe more determined and with better staying qualities. Minty led, and, striking the Macon road near Lovejoy's Station, he dismounted the 4th Michigan to tear up the track. Hardly had operations commenced when the regiment was suddenly and impetuously attacked in front and driven back. Simultaneously an attack was made in force on the right flank, which was met by the 7th Pennsylvania. A detachment from Long's Brigade was dismounted and sent forward at double quick. The skirmish line was being gradually forced back and a strong line of infantry was developed coming out of the woods. This proved to be Cleburne's Division. Long's entire brigade (the 2d) was now dismounted and deployed on the right, while a line of breast-works was thrown up in the rear. The firing became heavy on both sides. In front the enemy was resolutely held for awhile and our men then fell back to the works, whence a fire was opened that staggered the advancing lines and threw them into some confusion. This enabled Lieut. Bennett, of the battery, to bring off his two pieces which were near being lost. In this affair we had several killed and wounded; of the latter two officers of the 4th Ohio.

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It was now apparent that not only was there a formidable force of cavalry in the rear, but a large body of infantry, with cavalry and cannon, in front. The dismounted regiments fell back and remounted under severe musketry. Kilpatrick called a hurried council of the brigade commanders. The foe was not only in front and rear but our flanks were being enveloped. There was but one advisable course—to make a quick, vigorous, desperate charge, break their lines, and cut our way out. The decision was prompt. The force behind was evidently the weaker and was, therefore, chosen for the attack.

The two brigades of the 2d Division were formed in two ranks, stretching across a great corn-field, while the 3d Division formed behind them. Sabers were drawn and, at the bugle signal, all galloped forward. The Confederates saw the movement and tried valiantly to stem the onset. Shells screamed overhead and grape and canister rattled like hail. Their smaller arms, too, played briskly. It was a scene of wild and fierce excitement. Owing to the irregular nature of the ground, after leaving the corn-field no regular alignment was possible, and it soon became a charge of squadrons, companies, squads, and single riders. Bullets whistled and comrades fell, but the command spurred on to increased speed—

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shouted, yelled and still dashed on. Over fences and gullies, and then a wide ravine; through brush and dense timber, whose gnarled and low-hanging branches literally tore men from their saddles; across a great marsh where horses almost swamped—onward the irresistible force rushes and strikes the enemy fully and fairly. Sabers flash in the air, pistols and carbines belch forth sulphur smoke. The unexpected movement, the sudden and impetuous charge, as of victorious ranks rather than desperate battalions essaying a forlorn hope, had amazed the confronting foe; the fierce onset shattered his lines; he resists stubbornly for a little while, then gives ground, turns to escape, and is routed completely. But, meanwhile, his fire on our flank had been sharp and we suffered severely. On a knoll on the left were two guns belching out grape and canister. So galling was their fire that the charge was greatly retarded on that flank. These must be silenced, and a force dashes up the acivity “into the very jaws of death.” Every gunner is killed or captured.

At such a time artillery was an awkward encumbrance, yet one piece was brought off safely. Prisoners, too, were an encumbrance, and few were taken along. They were simply disarmed and left on the field where captured. Had time and circumstance permitted the rebel battery could have been brought off as a trophy, and some hundreds of prisoners. Consternation had evidently seized the rebel ranks, for they threw down their arms by scores and begged for quarter. Our business was to cut through and *get out*, and this was done, though many a noble fellow was left behind. Among those who fell that day was Capt. Wm. H. Scott, an associate of the writer on Gen. Eli Long’s staff—not killed outright, but mortally wounded. “A braver spirit never laid its life upon its country’s altar.” He was struck by a grape shot and fell from his horse, but, in that mad ride—in the face of that deadly storm of lead and iron—it were death to halt even though a dear friend had fallen.

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The command was naturally much scattered and much time occupied in reforming for the march. This enabled Cleburne to close up on us. In the new formation Long’s Brigade had the rear of column and the 3d Ohio the post of danger. This regiment was soon attacked and shells were thrown into our column. Gen. Long remained with the 3d to direct its movements. The position held by the regiment was a good one, being protected by rail breast-works (the men were afoot) and below a declivity extending into a marsh; beyond this a creek. As the rebels came across the creek they opened a vigorous fire, and, simultaneously, another line moved up at close quarters on the right. The 3d held its fire until the enemy reached the marsh, and then every carbine cracked. Just at this juncture Long’s horse was struck (for he had remained mounted), and a moment after he himself received two wounds, through wrist and thigh, which compelled him to leave the field. The 3d Ohio fell slowly back, leaving the dead bodies of several of their comrades, including Lieut. Garfield. They were then relieved by a regiment from Minty’s Brigade. The column being put in motion, moved on to McDonogh and thence to Cotton river, the enemy following and harassing until night-fall.

Sunday morning, August 21st, we crossed Cotton river by swimming, the stream being much swollen. One trooper was drowned and a piece of artillery had to be abandoned. The enemy, continuing the pursuit, had pressed hard on the rear all morning, but a safe crossing was finally effected and then South river was reached and crossed. At this place a large mill was burned and the bridge destroyed. Thence the march was via Lithonia, Latimar’s and Decatur to Buck Head, which place was reached on the evening of Monday, August 22d.

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Thus ended the famous “Kilpatrick Raid,” an expedition wisely planned and full of “great expectations.” That it did not produce the fruits hoped for was not the fault of any of “our folks.” Lay the blame at the door of the Confederacy. It accomplished much good and the Confederate loss was large. Statistics are not at hand from which to give our casualties in full, but Long’s Brigade lost seven officers and eighty-seven men in killed, wounded, and prisoners. The charge at Lovejoy’s Station was one of the grandest, most extensive, and brilliant cavalry charges of the entire war. Kilpatrick, in his enthusiasm, claimed that nothing equal to it had *ever* been witnessed. It certainly has *few* equals, and hence has been deemed worthy of elaborate review in these pages.

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