

Sherman expected to take the field at the head of his brigade, but he was persuaded that he could be of greater service to the country if he remained in the Senate. The brigade was known throughout the war as the Sherman Brigade.

My father's war record may be summed up as follows:

Enlisted October 12, 1861, as private, Company E, 65th Ohio volunteer Infantry

Promoted to First Sergeant, Company E, November 5, 1861

First Lieutenant, June 16, 1862

Captain, June 14, 1864

Major, October 10, 1865

Lieutenant-colonel, November 24, 1865. He was commissioned lieutenant-colonel by the Governor, but was not mustered in that rank by the War Department. The inscription on his tombstone in Arlington Cemetery shows the rank of Major, the highest rank to which he is accredited in the records of the War Department.

Served for several months after the war in Texas, guarding the Mexican border.

Mustered out with regiment at Victoria, Texas; November 30, 1865

Participated in the following battles:

Stone River, Tennessee, December 30, 1862 - January 3, 1863

Chickamauga, Tennessee, September 19, 1863

Rocky Face Ridge, Georgia, May 9, 1864

Resaca, Georgia, May 14-15, 1864

* Peach Tree Creek, Georgia, July 20, 1864

Siege of Atlanta, Georgia, July 22 - August 23, 1864

Nashville, Tennessee, December 15-16, 1864

He was wounded in the right elbow at Chickamauga. The name of the battle and the date were tattooed around the scar.

It is interesting to recall the songs that always become popular during a war. One of the songs of the Revolution was Yankee Doodle. During the War with Spain everybody sang There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight. And during the First World War the doughboys sang, among other songs, Tipperary and Over There. One such song of the Civil War was The Girl I Left Behind Me. My father left behind him a girl named Viola Osborne, to whom he was engaged. She died

* Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia, June 27, 1864

Battle of Stone River

Camp 65th O.V. near Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Jan. 11, 1863

Dear Friends:

The great battle is over and Murfreesboro is ours. Three cheers, aye, three times three for the gallant Rosecrans and his brave army. I do not mean to be egotistical - I am only one among forty thousand. Is an apology necessary for my two weeks' silence? When we left Nashville Dec 26 we had but three wagons to each regiment, and a few days after for fear of capture those were sent back to N. and we did not see them again till last Thursday. All our baggage, even blankets, was left back and of course writing letters was entirely out of the question, nor was there any opportunity to mail them could they have been written. Thursday we were on picket - Friday we moved camp. Saturday we went foraging and today I have a little time to write you. I would that mine were as "the pen of a ready writer" that I might chronicle for you the events of the past fourteen days. They have been days of trial, hardship and anxiety. Their history alone would fill a volume and I scarcely know where to begin or what to write for one short letter, but if time and circumstances permit I will endeavor within a week or two to give you a brief history of it all. I think in this letter I will describe the events of Wednesday Dec 31, the day on which the principal part of the battle was fought. There was more or less fighting for six days, including Monday and Saturday, but I will not attempt a description of the whole now.

Letting it all pass for the present behold the 65th on picket Tuesday night Dec. 30th on the bank of Stone's river in the face of the enemy. About midnight we received orders to be in readiness to march upon the enemy's works at daylight. To every man was issued 20 rounds of cartridge to carry on his person besides the regular number of 40 in box, making 60 in all. Is it strange that peculiar feeling seemed to pervade the company and regiment and indeed I might say the entire army? The voice of mirth, the laugh and jest were hushed and on the countenance of every one seemed to be a cloud of serious and thoughtful anxiety. All was quiet along the lines during the night save when the rebel pickets with characteristic barbarity fired upon our men who went to the river for water. Before daylight we were all on the alert, ready with rations cooked for the day awaiting orders to move. It was the plan of Gen. Rosecrans to make a general advance, attack the enemy at all points and drive him from his entrenchments, but his plans were entirely thwarted by unexpected attack of the rebels at daybreak on the extreme

right. The division commanded by Gen. Johnson was surprised in a most disgraceful manner - thrown into confusion and compelled to fall back. Had it not been for this disaster, caused by the unpardonable neglect of Gen. Johnson in not taking proper precautions against a surprise, our victory would have been much more complete than it was. The line of battle was nearly two miles in length, Crittenden's corps, consisting of Wood's, Van Cleve's and Smith's divisions being upon the left, Thomas' corps in the center, and McCook's on the right. When we heard the roar of battle in the morning on our right we could not tell at our distance the exact condition of affairs, but supposed McCook had attacked the rebels and we would speedily cross the river and engage them on the left. For two long hours we waited in fearful suspense expecting momentarily orders to move, but no orders came. Meanwhile the battle raged fiercely on the right. The roar of incessant cannonading shook the very earth while the fire of musketry was terrific. Across the river on the summit of a hill a mile distant we could distinctly see the rebels planting a battery commanding our position with the evident design of shelling us. I must say that we felt rather fidgety as we beheld the burnished cannon glistening in the bright sunlight as they brought them in range and prepared to open on us. The original plan was for Van Cleve's division to cross the river a mile below, march up and engage the enemy while Wood and Smith threw their forces across, and not knowing then of the surprise on the right and consequent change of the programme to defensive rather than offensive, we wondered why we did not come up. Between eight and nine o'clock our brigade was ordered to cross without delay and cover the passage of the others and for this purpose we were formed in line; but just at that moment a courier came riding in hot haste bearing an order for us to move over at once and support the extreme right which was falling back unable to hold its ground. We started at a double quick and immediately the battery across the river opened upon us with shell and sent a dozen of those dreaded missiles after us in quick succession.

Shells are most terribly destructive missiles and soldiers dread them more than anything else. Sometimes a single one thrown with precision and bursting at the right moment will kill and wound 20 men, mangle and mutilating most horribly. One exploded in Co. B. of our regiment killing two men and wounding another. As we neared the scene of action everything was in the wildest confusion. A short distance ahead was heard the loud booming of cannon and sharp rattle of musketry; infantry, regiment after regiment, batteries of artillery and squadrons of cavalry, were being hurried forward with the utmost possible speed, hundreds of ammunition and hospital wagons being pushed out over the stony pike to get them out of the way; couriers riding furiously to and fro, officers shouting commands to their men, shells bursting in every direction -- all combined to form a scene most terribly exciting. We advanced to within a hundred yards of the line then engaged with the enemy and lay down to await our turn to enter the fray. Here I will just remark that during a battle all troops not actually engaged or moving their positions lie flat upon the ground, that being much the safest posture. In front the line was literally a blaze of fire while the dense smoke almost concealed the combatants from view.

If you would like to know my feelings during those moments of suspense just before going into the fight you will have to wish and wonder still,

for it is impossible, absolutely, to describe them. Language is utterly incapable of conveying the idea. Such feelings must be realized before they can be known. For a long time (it seemed to us) probably 15 or 20 minutes, neither line wavered, but at length a tremendous cheer from our men and a mighty rush forward with fixed bayonets over heaps of the slain told us that the rebels were yielding. But now came the intelligence that a heavy column of the enemy was advancing still farther to our right for the purpose of turning our right flank, and it must be checked for upon that movement in a great measure hung the fortunes of the day. If the rebels were successful in outflanking us the battle was irretrievably lost to us. Our brigade was sent as a kind of "forlorn hope" to prevent this occurrence. A messenger delivered an order to the Colonel and immediately came the commands, "Battalion - Rise up - Right face - Forward - Doublequick - March!" and off we went farther and still farther to the right to dispute the advance of the legions of rebels who stretched their line on and on much farther than we had anticipated to get beyond us if possible. At length their long line was formed and was discovered advancing to the front and we promptly formed to meet them. The gallant 65th was in the front of our brigade, supported by the 64th Ohio and 73d Indiana. On our right was the 6th Ohio Battery supported by the 51st Indiana and 13th Michigan; on our left a brigade from Van Cleve's Division. The remaining two brigades of Wood's Division were then engaged on the extreme left where we were early in the morning. Thus we moved forward firmly and steadily awaiting with the utmost anxiety the commencement of the conflict. Companies I and H were deployed as skirmishers and sent ahead under the command of Major Whitbeck and were soon sharply engaged with the enemy's skirmishers. The rebels approached under cover of the woods while we were in the open field, and as we ascended a rise of ground the balls of the skirmishers whistled around us pretty lively and four men, including the lieutenant commanding Company A, fell severely wounded. We advanced a short distance in the woods and immediately the action became general. We loaded and fired lying down and the rebels ditto, the lines being about 200 yards apart.

I have often read of battles and formed ideas concerning them, but the reality far exceeds anything I ever conceived. Our battery opened with shell and was replied to by a rebel battery on their left. The roar of artillery and musketry was deafening while every moment it seemed as though a score of balls were hissing as near my head as they could come without striking. Our men almost without exception proved themselves true soldiers and fought most bravely, pouring a tremendous fire into the ranks of the enemy. Many of our gallant boys were soon stretched upon the ground killed or wounded, and oh! how our hearts ached to hear the groans of the suffering ones without being able to do anything for their relief. I have seen a great many who fell on other bloody fields, but never was I so moved as when I saw those of our own company and regiment, with whom I have been associated every day for fourteen months, mangled and bleeding by my side. No one is allowed to leave the ranks to attend to the wounded, but as fast as possible they were taken to the rear by men detailed for that purpose. While we held our front and the enemy did not gain an inch, for some unaccountable reason the brigade on our left gave way almost without

firing a shot and the large body of rebels opposed to them advanced unchecked. It was evident that owing to the cowardice of others we would be surrounded and taken in a few moments longer. It being of course impossible for us to hold in check any more than our own front. We had been engaged about twenty minutes when the order was given to fall back. To the everlasting honor of the men of the 65th, however, be it said that the command was given three times before it was obeyed. Had the brigade on our left done its duty as well it is easy to say what the result would have been. As it was we had no alternative but to retreat and did so nearly a fourth of a mile while the 64th and 73d engaged them some 200 yards in the rear of our fighting ground.

We rallied and formed behind a rail fence to the left of our former position, and although our ranks were terribly shattered we were determined to do what we could to check the advance of the mighty column which was moving proudly on with unthinned lines as if it would completely overwhelm our little band. Bear in mind that this second body of rebels with which we fought was not the one we had first engaged but the one before which the other brigade had given way. I am entirely safe when I say they were at least five times our number for I saw three rebel flags indicating as many regiments - there were probably more - and we but 22 strong, the rest of our brigade being then engaged on our right. Oh, how bitterly the men cursed the cowardice of the troops who had fallen back and thus left us to contend against such fearful odds! Truer, braver men than those of the 65th never shouldered a gun. When we commenced firing from behind the fence the enemy were but 150 yards distant and our hearts almost sank within us as we saw the long dark lines advancing bold and defiant, flaunting their banners of treason mockingly toward us. Our boys loaded and fired with all their might at that distance - every moment growing less - nearly every ball took effect and made sad havoc among them. We were partially protected by the fence but a perfect hailstorm of bullets rattled against the rails and trees around us while many found their way between the rails and took fatal effect. A rebel flag immediately in front of us was a particular mark for our boys and the bearer of it was shot down two or three times, but it was quickly raised again and waved at us defiantly. The 73d Indiana and 64th Ohio on our right had meanwhile fallen back after a severe engagement and still our boys would not yield. On came the hordes of rebels till their line was but 20 paces distant and the fire of both sides was deadly and appalling. The troops on our right and left having all retired the enemy rushed impetuously forward on both flanks in advance of the center (which our fire slightly checked) thinking to surround and capture us entirely. When they had crossed the fence on both sides of us and were fast closing around us pouring in a galling cross fire, it was utter folly and madness to remain longer. Five minutes more and everyone engaged who escaped the balls would have been a prisoner and the order "Retreat" was given. To execute this, however, seemed almost certain death for as soon as we rose up we would be exposed to a terrible fire without any protection whatever. Any delay, however, and we were doomed, and rising to our feet we took a double double quick while the rebels poured a terrific volley into us. On this occasion and once after (of which I will try to tell you in my next) we made I believe the fastest time on record. Many lost overcoats, haversacks, canteens, &c, but almost without exception the guns were brought off. Many fell - one just at my side was struck by a ball and dropped with a heartrending groan. How I escaped He who preserved me only knows, but it seemed as though not

one could come out of that fearful fire untouched. Oh, how tears of joy and thankfulness came into our eyes as we saw a few paces in front of us two strong fresh regiments of Illinois boys coming to our rescue! They lay down partially concealed by a thicket, we passed over them and when the rebel line had advanced to within a few yards rose and poured a most deadly volley into them and immediately charged bayonets upon the surprised rebels with a cheer that seemed to rend the skies. The secesh broke and ran in the wildest confusion, throwing away guns, cartridge boxes and whatever else impeded them in their flight. Cheer after cheer went up from the brave "Succors" as they pursued the flying enemy across the fields. The fate of the day was decided - the right wing was saved. To the 20th brigade and the 27th and 51st Illinois belong the honor of deciding the fortunes of the battle. So at least General Rosecrans has since said.

A few incidents among ten thousand. When we were retiring the rebels had driven two or three of our men into a kind of cave in the rocks, taken them prisoners and left a guard over them with a lieutenant to parole them. While busily engaged in making out the papers the lieutenant heard the confusion of their retreat and rushing out to see what had turned up discovered that the boot had suddenly shifted to the other leg, and he and his men were prisoners together with some 200 others. General Cheatham commanded the rebel forces but we engaged to cheat 'em out of their expected victory.

Since we came to Murfreesboro we found in one of the hospitals some secesh who were wounded in the engagement with us and they say we made dreadful havoc among them. One Brigadier General Rains of Arkansas was mortally wounded. The fight lasted a little less than an hour and in this short time our regiment lost 173 men out of 380 with which we went in, a ratio of almost half. Of 16 officers 11 were killed or wounded.

On Saturday after the battle I sent you a letter giving the names of those wounded in our company. Since then two of our very best men have died - Corporal George Clement of Brunswick and David Haines of Marlboro. The others are doing well. They have been removed to Nashville and will probably get home.

We took a survey of the battlefield some days after the battle and it seems a wonder that a man escaped. The trees were literally covered with bullet marks. In one small one not more than four inches in diameter I counted eleven ball holes below the height of a man. Let us be thankful to God for his goodness and mercy in sparing my life thus far.

After the enemy were repulsed the time till night was spent in caring for the wounded. They were brought off the field in ambulances and upon stretchers and blankets. Every house in the vicinity was used as a hospital but still very many were compelled to lie in the open air for want of room under shelter. It was enough to appal the stoutest heart to visit some of them and witness the horrible wounds and excruciating agonies of (illegible). Many could not have their wounds dressed for two or three days and suffered intensely for lack of proper care. It is safe to say that at least half those who die of their wounds could be saved were they at home where they could have good care and nursing. Hundreds die, are buried and forgotten, and guns and cartridge boxes without claimants are all that remind us they are gone. But I cannot bear to write of this dismal part of the subject. I have seen so many of the dead and wounded that my heart is sick and I cannot think of it without almost shedding tears.

Sometimes I involuntarily ask myself, "Is the Union worth it?" I feel willing to give my life if it will save the country, but is it worth so many thousand precious lives, so much suffering? It is a grand, beautiful, sublime thing to stay at home and talk of patriotism, the glory of dying for one's country, &c ad infinitum, but it is something else to do the suffering and dying. Don't think now I'm getting anxious for a compromise to close the war for I am not, but I defy any living man, or woman either, to walk over a battlefield and not have such thoughts. I often think of what a rebel prisoner from North Carolina once told me. "If we are ever to succeed in gaining our Confederacy I wish we could do it now, and if we are not I wish you could conquer us immediately to save any further loss of life."

I find I am extending my letter to great length - much more than I had intended, but I hope you will bear with me. It seems as though I had not mentioned half of what I wished to, but there is so very much connected with a single day my letter has grown intermittently and without getting over much ground. I will try to write you again in a day or two and tell you some of the events of the remainder of the "bloody week." My health is very good indeed. Notwithstanding the terrible ordeal through which we have passed of exposure and hardship I feel as well and hearty as at any time in my life. We have had no mail since leaving Nashville and I do not know as you will get this for some time.

Love to all. Don't forget to write often.

Yours,

Wilbur F. Hirman