

WILLIAM P. PALMER CIVIL WAR MISCELLANEOUS MANUSCRIPTS  
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This narrative, written by an enlisted man who apparently served in the Sixty-Fifth New York Infantry, is one of the best self-contained battle pieces available in a private repository. Among other things, it contains a very interesting description of the use of orderlies (enlisted men) as adjunct staff officers for scouting, delivery of messages, and battlefield reporting. From his service as a mounted orderly before and during the battle of Cedar Creek in 1864, Brogan dealt with, and acted under instructions from, brigade, division, and corps commanders, many of whom appear in his narrative. His story begins with a scout a few days prior to the battle and information that Confederates in force had regathered after their disastrous defeat at Fishers Hill, had received a division of reinforcements from Richmond, and had begun their advance toward Sheridan's army. Unsuspectingly, Sheridan's army lay peacefully encamped along the Valley Pike south of Winchester.

Brogan left a marvelous puzzle of punctuation and capitalization. The irritating "sic" appears too much as it is, the editor having tried to preserve Brogan's irregular spelling to give a sense of the man, much like the enchanting Will James stories. When the narrative did not require modernization of Brogan's punctuation or capitalization, it remained as he wrote it; but free alteration has been applied to preserve the flow of his excellent narrative.

## VENI VIDI VICI

By John P. Brogan

The month of October, 1864, saw the army of the Shenandoah lying in Cantonments on the banks of Cedar Creek, Virginia, a swift running brawling, tumbling, boulder strewn Stream the banks of which rose in precipitous Cliffs from twenty to one hundred feet in height, clothed thickly wherever the soil gave holt [sic] for their roots, by Cedars, dark leafed mostly but interspersed Singly and sometimes in bunches by their Silvery Cousins, White and shining as if reflecting the brilliant sparkling of the waters rushing in haste to throw the drainage of hundreds of mountain offerings to swell the flood of the beautiful Shenandoah.

We had followed the enemy after their defeat at Fishers Hill to Harrisonburg in the upper valley; and as our commanding general supposed there was no further fight in them, we leisurely withdrew to a position from which an enemy would have to attack prior to any advance threatening to the North, and secondarily to be close to our base, one day's journey for teams at Stevenson's Station twenty miles in our rear. We built breastworks along our front and parallel to the Creek to its Confluence with the river at Bowman's ford and sat down in fancied security to clean ourselves up and get a much needed rest and what ever our general thought. The man of the rank and file never dreamed that the Confederates meditated a bloody revenge for the double defeats of Winchester and Fisher Hill.

If ancient or modern history in any statements fully verified shows when the actual presence of one man could change a defeat into an overwhelming victory, I have failed to read of it, but that it is a stubborn fact all men know for a certainty. The coming on the battlefield of Sheridan when he did proves beyond any doubt that his presence alone wrought a miracle but by

natural effects, such as the firm belief of each soldier that we were invincible and that an equal number of foes on a fair field stood not a remote chance of success if our Commander Sheridan marshalled [sic] his men personally to battle. That he was absent was unknown in the early part of the engagement and when known it accounted for our early disaster of the morning hours. That a well led and a disciplined army could be surprised and driven from a fortified camp by an equal number of an enemy was not alone disgraceful but cowardly in the extreme, and right here no matter what dispatches or orders, even reports, of Gen. Sheridan say in connection with the action, the actual facts are the men of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Corps were the victims of incompetent ignorant or drunken officers--and the gallant Sheridan's reports were partly meant to shield and save from punishment and disgrace officers who were foremost in the route from the field. Some of them proved they were no cowards in the afternoon's fight, but the[y] showed the lamentable fact that they were wholly unable to grasp the situation or assume the initiative to face about and renew the battle of their own volition, never appealed to the officers of the broken Corps with the glorious exception of this two a general officer, and the other a subaltern on the staff of General Crook. And strange what the future held for both R B Hayes and William McKinley. Both tried [sic] to form their men on our left but their endeavours [sic] came to naught as the panic stricken horde of refugees broke over their line and swept their men off with them. Both officers took their place with Gen. Wheaton and remained with the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps during the fight that followed and until the arrival of Gen. Sheridan on the field about 11.25 A.M.

To understand the position of our troops a description of the surrounding country and its topography is necessary. In front of us and casting its gigantic shadow over our Camp, Three Top Mountain, a broken outshoot of the Blue Ridge. Partly in front and to our left lay the lofty

extension of the Cacapon range, a spur from the Alleghenies. Between those mountains lay a gorge, narrow towards our Camps but widening out below Strasburg at Fishers Hill to three or four miles up this break in the mountains, ran the Valley Pike which connected the upper and lower vallies [sic]. Our Camps commanded egress from above except by a rough route by Front Royal necessitating the crossing of both forks of the Shannandoah and when the river was in flood, impracticable to anything on wheels and generally so for troops as all bridges had been long burned in the innumerable campaigns waged for possession of the granary of Virginia. There were other means of access by what in the vernacular were called hogpaths--not practical for artillery or horses--and if an enemy were discovered making an advance, their destruction were inevitable [sic?] before they could debouch enough of men to keep the trail open, but to an enterprising enemy every chance is taken if it promise a modicum of success and to General John B. Gordon of the Confederates is due the discovery and plan to attack and defeat our forces by using those woodland paths to come in on our flanks as such modes of approaching our lines were not known, or if known were totally disregarded by our generals with bloody results to their soldiers who lay in fancied security, oblivious of all danger, not dreaming of the near proximity of a foe newly reinforced by Kershaw's division of Longstreet's Corps under direct and positive orders to wipe out and destroy Sheridan's army of the valley. Such was [sic] General Lee's orders. How near to being carried out successfully our torn up and slaughtered battalions and batteries amply testifies [sic].

To properly understand the battle a plan of our camp is necessary. Our front as previously stated fronted on Cedar Creek which washed the base of North Mountain and Thee [sic] Top and was bisected by the Valley pike running nearly north and south from Martinsburg to Stanton. A

small village called Middletown lay immediately in our rear occupied by our headquarters whilst Strasburg six miles distant held the same position for the Confederates. Our army lay en echelon [sic] by Corps. The 8<sup>th</sup> Corps under the command of Gen. Crook occupied the extreme left extending to the north fork of the Shenandoah River its left flank supposed to be covered by cavalry to guard the river fords. Next to their right came the 19<sup>th</sup> Corps Commanded by Gen. Emory, their right extended to the Valley Pike. Covering Middletown and approaches, the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps under Gen. Getty connected with their right and extended across the level meadows for one mile. Back on their right and rear were the cavalry of Gen. Torbert ready for action wherever required, all under command of Gen. H. G. Wright during Sheridan's absence. A strong position well chosen and easily defended from a frontal attack, a grand right wheel by Corps brought all our forces up to the works in line of battle, but the best laid plans of mice and men oft gang alee. Our opponents were not going to attempt the impossible when our camps were open to their inspection. The panorama was open to their inspection from the top of the mountain that overhung our camp. With a good field glass every piece of artillery, every regimental colour, even the amount of our forces numerically could be counted; and Jed Hotchkiss, topographical engineer with Gen. Early, told me since the war he sketched General Sheridan's headquarters and the best way to approach it with the hope when they made the surprise of the 19<sup>th</sup> they might capture or kill the General himself for they did not know for a certainty until [sic] noon of the 18<sup>th</sup> October of the General's absence. A girl of 14 years of age living in Middletown, stole through our lines, waded the creek, and brought a letter from a reliable source telling of Sheridan's absence and some jolly times till late hours at his headquarters in the big house at Middletown.

A question might arise in the minds of readers of this article as to how an enlisted man could from personal knowledge write of this battle from the limited Knowledge gained on the firing line whilst doing what any person slightly conversant with the duties required of any man in the ranks would make prohibitory knowledge of occurrences outside his line of vision. An explanation that explains is due for my own sake as well as to enlighten who ever looks over this account of an engagement famous in poetry, prose, history, fabled about, exaggerated, made heroes out of second class soldiers and cowards out of brave men, a fight where the paltrons were confined to the Commissioned officers where, if the men, when they realised the way they were doublecrossed, had been let [sic] take their own gate would have discounted Sheridan's arrival and whipped the enemy off the field before he left Winchester, only twelve miles away.

Whilst lying at Mt. Jackson immediately after our fight at Fishers Hill, I was ordered to report to the colonel of my regiment. On doing so the following colloquy occurred outside of actual duty. Conversation between men and officers of the Sixth Corps were on the plane of equality. Reasons therefor nine out of ten, had risen from the ranks.

"John, you are a fair scholar. I know you can ride a horse. Having served in the navy you ain't liable to mistake a supply train for a battery of field pieces. I believe you could tell every regiment in this division. Headquarters wants a man for mounted orderly with certain qualifications which I believe you possess so report to the A. A. General for duty. If anything goes wrong and you don't like it, come back. You are always welcome."

So by a mere accident I was converted into a cavalryman mounted and armed as such, but with duties so manifold and onerous that I never fully realized one half of them and in fact never tryed [sic] to but having from my earliest recollections been a rider and passionately fond of

horses, I quickly became a favourite as a bold and fearless trooper who could take a horse anywhere a goat could climb and stone walls or rail fences were built for the express purpose of my jumping them. Along with rugged health and a philosophical disposition that took the world as I met it and believed that the sustaining of the old Union meant the future life of democracy and our defeat would throw the cause of liberty back a century, I was a fatalist as to what might happen to me individually. So I entered on my duties well equipped for any requirements called for, and a coolness in danger which in retrospect I have wondered at and can not account for except on the theory that all persons have certain inherited gifts different from others so as to preserve an equilibrium [sic] in the human race and thereby making living and being easier for the masses who make a living world.

I reported at headquarters of the division, was given a horse and equipments, told my duties, and was left to my own shifts how to carry them out. Our horses were of the best necessarily so from the continuous duty required which in a broad sense were to carry orders to brigade, battery, or regiment or information required from corps commanders. Such work carried us over the whole field and made us familiar with the topography of the camps and the location of all organizations. We were really enlisted aid [sic] de camps and done the duties of commissioned staff officers along with scouting the country in front or flanks. Whilst on the march and often whilst lying in camp, information would be desired--an enterprising orderly would be told what was wanted, mount and go. Generally if he came back his information was reliable and was always regarded as such but the fatalities amongst them were fearful. There were requisitions always at regimental headquarters to fill up vacancies. The order would read like this, "I have the honour to report that Private John Smith whilst on a scout has disappeared.

Nothing heard of him since the 15<sup>th</sup> Inst. Supposed to be ambushed by guerillas. The dead body of his horse found on back country road, saddle stained with blood. Send good man to take his place. Respectfully."

So, a fast horse, a quick eye, and nerves of steel were the only attributes necessary to give a chance of life continued but there was another side that appealed to the American soldier, the freedom from strict discipline of the camps, the independence of action naturally inherent in the free born citizen, the glorious feeling of freedom from control and that my own hand can save my head, and when acting my part, I don't rely or depend on another's Judgment, the individual hatred of constraint, the assumption that I am your superior, not through any inherent ability, and through accident placed over men who got to obey or suffer the Consequences. Such petty tyranny was totally eliminated [sic] from the life of the rough rider. He was treated most generally by all officers with respect and confidence, and naturally reciprocated.

For three weeks before Cedar Creek battle I was constantly engaged in Scouting as far as Mt. Jackson in the upper Valley and Front Royal in the Luray. We were constantly chased in by the enemies [sic] cavalry when we tried to discover if they were covering an advance of infantry. There were highly paid civilian scouts accompanying us who invariable tryed [sic] to get their information through our endeavours [sic]. We lost several men by their tactics and refused to take any orders from them or give any information to them. Knowing their financial credit depended on what news they brought from the front, they were not particular either of its falseness or reliability. Their modus operandi in all cases were to order a couple of us orderlies to ride ahead to some suspicious piece of woods, a farm house, mill, or village or other place of concealment, whilst they watched from a place of safety the outcome. We lost some good men by their

wisdom, untill [sic] we turned the tables. Up the Luray Valley, we had halted to view the country, which was extremely rough. I rode up on a small hill and distinctly saw the glint of a rifle barrell [sic] as it reflected the sun--rejoining the squad of four orderlies, and the two scouts; who by their overbearing insulting way of addressing us, and who were the Cause of the loss of two good men the day before had made themselves obnoxious to us along with a belief they were both Confederates brought things to a climax as we intended and planned beforehand.

"There are rebels behind that hill, enough of them to wipe us out. Infantry from the long rifle one of them carried," I said to Scout Jones.

"Infantry nothing," he declared, "You can see a Johnnie behind every bush. Your [sic] afraid of the shadow of a reb."

My carbine was leveled instantly at his breast whilst the other orderlies covered his partner.

"Ride out, you hounds. Straight for that gap. Forward march. Walk your horses. If we discover you making any signs you are dead before you reach your friends."

They obeyed orders, and rode in single file. We kept them covered with our Spencers untill [sic] they entered the ravine through which the road ran--a quick report of some rifles on the hillside. Both men and one horse fell. The other animal galloped back to where we viewed the scene--and after a few interchange of shots we rode leisurely away out of range. There we decided to find out about the force who got our quandom friends and make sure to what arm of the service they belonged. Secreting our horses in thick brush and making them secure, we took up the wooded side of the hill from the opposite direction of our former discovery. There we saw some thirty odd men with their horses. Cavalry no doubt but armed with infantry muskets. They

had the bodies of our two scouts and were evidently waiting for a farm wagon which was approaching their bivouac [sic]. That they were friends was easily apparent from the care they were taking of the scouts as two men with brush were keeping the flies off[f] their faces. As soon as the wagon arrived they loaded the men in it and drove off. The officer in command, pointing to where we were concealed, sent two men up to spy the country around. We wanted those men badly. They were dropping into our hands--we lay in the laurels until [sic] the foremost rounded a flat rock on the far side of which we were concealed--one of our men showed himself too soon and the man behind took alarm, gave a yell, started to run, but was dropped in the first fifty yards. His body rolled down the steep hill until [sic] lodged against a tree. The leading man was ours, sound and whole.

"Sit down, Johnnie. Don't move."

He obeyed. His comrades below were nonplussed--but finally decided to drive us from our position rightly judging we were the same party the scouts failed to lead into the trap prepared for us. They deployed like gallant soldiers and advanced, not knowing that four men under cover and armed with seven shooters were more than a match for ten times their number. A couple of minutes showed the futility of any attempt to carry the hill and taking their captain who was wounded and leaving several others behind them, they retreated precipitately out of range of our guns, and having got all the information attainable, we took our prisoner and got to our horses as fast as possible, started for camp and on the way our captive, who was a sergeant [sic] in Fitz Hugh Lee's Cavalry, told us the scouts were spies of theirs, but I think their business days are over for we [illegible] riddled them with bullets. We reached camp and turned our man over to headquarters and reported the scout's loss.

The whole of the 18<sup>th</sup> October, we were engaged from left to right in scouting our front. Whenever we attempted to go any distance from our pickets we were confronted by small parties of the enemies [sic] cavalry. They swarmed everywhere. It struck me forcibly there was something going on behind the mountains for their horsemen were ubiquitous [sic]. In reporting that evening to our Adj. General, I ventured to remark that the enemy were too aggressive [sic] for a mere reconaissance. There was something going on behind the scenes, that they were merely a screen to hide some movement.

"You are mistaken, my boy. From last reports of our spies their infantry are thirty to forty miles from here and have not got over the thrashing administered to them at Winchester and Fishers Hill. By the way there came to our camp an Irish boy from Staunton. He is trying to get to New York. He says he passed by several large camps of infantry around Hupps hill and that Kershaw has joined Early with a big force direct from Richmond. I believe he has been sent in by the Rebels. We have him under guard, he speaks abominable English, relapses into native Irish every couple of sentences. Could you not get some man to talk to him."

I answered in the affirmative and proceeded to hunt up Henry Connolly, an old regular sargeant [sic] who drilled the Orderlies at Corps headquarters. I brought him over. The boy was interogated before the General what ever was elicited--it was giving no credence, but Connolly was grave when he passed me at dusk.

"John, there will be something doing soon. Look to your saddle girths, me boy. I'm certain we will have visitors one of those mornings when we aint looking for them. That Irish boy is not as big a fool as the general takes him for. Their infantrymen were filling their cartridge boxes, with spare packages thrust in their pockets. Look out for something to happen when the

doughboys are getting ready. Of course our head officers ought to know what's going on, but do they always?"

The night of the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> passed quietly. We were sleeping in our dogtents when ere the dawn of day a sharp rattle of musketry was heard on our extreme left. It was no volley firing but such as an attack on the pickets would likely invoke. At the sound men and officers flung the[ir] blankets off and most were pulling on their clothes. We made for the picket ropes half dressed. I flung some corn into the nose bag and strapped it on my horse's head. He will get his breakfast anyway. Whilst dressing and saddling up the same desultory [sic] firing was kept up, and as I led my horse up to headquarters, the sound of a heavy volley came to us from the left rear. There was no mistaking that the enemy were attacking in force, the general came out of his tent buckling on his sword belt. His bugler with instrument in hand and jacket flung over his shoulder waited for orders.

"Sound the assembly."

The well known notes had barely commenced when the regimental drummers beat the long roll--there was a run for the color line, men dressing as they made for where the arms were stacked, in three minutes, our veteran infantry were ready. The ringing of ramrods as the guns were loaded were all the noise heard. Silent, dark, threatening [sic], the quiet ranks rested in place. A four gun battery trotted up and went into line on an elevation some fifty yards in the rear. Staff officers were riding here and there with orders, passing and repassing like wierd shadows, seen now, lost the instant after in the dense fog which hung low down on the field, rendering the keenest vision useless at twenty feet distance.

The firing to our left was increasing in volume, it had been confined to musketry, but began to be punctuated with artillery.

"Captured pieces, doubtless," said a young one armed staff officer to our general, who looking around discovered us orderlies standing by horse taking in what ever was visible in our vicinage.

"Mount, my man," addressing me. "Ride through there across the pike. Find out what's doing and get back as quick as possible."

I was in the saddle and away down in the little valley of Meadow Run and up its far side to the plateau on which ran the pike leading from Strasburg, crossing Cedar Creek by a substantial bridge, on through Middletown to Winchester, the main artery to which all other roads led.

My horse's hoofs had barely struck the pike when I encountered a mass of disorganized men, running to the rear, several without clothing, few with arms, officers and men bent on safety. As soon as they found the road under their feet, they changed the direction of their flight toward Winchester--to get through or by them was useless. I was carried along with the mob for a couple of hundred yards. At last I got loose, by using my revolver as some of the officers demanded my horse (Molino volurs) [sic?] but my colt settled the dispute as to the horse; and as soon as free; I rode back through the field skirting the pike; and trying every possible chance to get east of the road, I made it by drawing sabre and threatening to hew a passage across and riding due east. I came across a brigade of Iowa and Indiana men who were standing in line with their right and left flanks refused, firing by vollies [sic] and cheering with a will. The brigade

commander seeing the badge of the Sixth Corps on my Cap rode to me asking, "Where is your men? Are they coming to our assistance?"

"I am afraid not, sir. I was sent in to see what is adoing here. You are in front of our corps, and I don't believe the[y] will move in this fog."

"Go back and tell Gen. Wright I can't hold this position much longer without reinforcements.

I replied, "If you stay here five minutes, you will never leave it except as prisoners.

"Why?" sa[i]d a Colonel who just joined us.

"Listen to the firing on your right rear. The Johnnies are coming down the pike."

They were Wharton's division coming direct down the road and crossing the bridge over the Creek, were marching under cover of the fog right in front of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps who were unaware of their near proximity, heading straight for Middletown and cutting our army in two, capturing by their own reports 3200 men of the 8<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> Corps and all the artillery east of the road.

The fog seemed to thicken as I put about to get back to my command. The western brigade went off by regiments on the double heading north. I rode quickly and cautiously for the pike feeling my way for the road. There was a wagon path well defined at right angles to the pike. By stooping in the saddle I could easily follow it when I was surprised to hear this command.

"Second South Carolina, by file left, march. Close up in the rear. Stand here, you, Courier. Tell commanding officers to change directions of march, and follow the column."

Here was a predicament. The chances were I would not succeed in breaking through the line of march, but get back I was determined on. To head this column of the enemy was the only alternative. So I rode swiftly along the Carolina regiment, horse held well in hand and revolver ready. I had difficulty in keeping in touch as they marched in utter silence and the grass gave no sound of footfall; but calculating their regiments were no stronger than ours, I wheeled to the left and rode across this line of march, without a sign of enemy. Putting spurs to my mount I crossed the run and up the raise [sic] to where the left of our Corps were in line. Just as my success was certain, a horseman dashed out of the fog dressed in gray, both of us fired simultaneously the Confederate dropped his pistol and grasping his horses neck with both arms rode past me. I find twice at his horse and man and rider went down in a heap. In a half minute I was amongst our men. I told the Colonel of the 65<sup>th</sup> NY, they were on his flank. The battery was firing rapidly, as I rode in rear of the limbers. I informed its captain what to look for, and joined Gen. Wheaton and reported. My information was received with some doubts, but Gen. Wright, after giving orders for the 2d division which was on the right to march on the double to the left in rear of the 3d and 1<sup>st</sup> divisions, went with his staff to ascertain for himself the conditions on the left, but fortunately for himself he got there too late for as soon as the Confederate leader believed he had got as far as the flank and rear of our forces, which he could ascertain from the firing along our whole line, he fronted his men, advanced, doubled up, to within 60 or 70 yards and poured two separate volleys into our flanks. His second discharge took the Rhode island battery which had limbered up to go to the rear--11 men and 28 horses died in battery, and the 67<sup>th</sup> N. York attached to the 65<sup>th</sup> were mustered out by that fire, and ceased to exist as an organization from that time. Higginbotham, a gallant Scotsman, colonel of my regiment, and all his line officers fell

on that bloody Knoll. Hamelin, our brigadier, and Wright, our Corps Commander, were wounded, the latter not enough to leave the field. The 2d division, moving rapidly to the left and rear, took the daring enemy on their flank and drove them out, but Wharton and Ramseur pressed the attack on our whole front but were driven back. The fiercest fighting and greatest losses were in the 2d brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> division. The enemy attempted and succeeded once to Capture the guns of the Rhode island battery--our men were hauling them out by hand--but lost so heavily from the deadly fire of their pursuers, that they abandoned the guns, and took to their rifles. The Irish 60<sup>th</sup> N. York, smarting under the loss of Higginbotham, who was more than popular with his men, and over one third of the rank and file rallied under the lead of a tall beardless young Corporal, fixed bayonets, and charged back amongst the guns, and with butt and bayonet slaughtered or captured the 2d Carolina and 12<sup>th</sup> Alabama. The remainder of the division charged back and drove the enemy clear of their front, and were following them up when mounted officers rode in front of the men and stopped the forward movement.

"Fall back, men!" are the orders. And slowly and sullenly a retreat was commenced. The enemy finding the pressure relaxed followed us up, but took care to keep at a respectful distance untill [sic] our long blue line halted in an old road and waited for what. Our commanders were whipped; we were not.

It was during the fight on the left that an officer with the shoulder straps of a major rode into our lines. Where he came from no one asked. He was a stout compactly built man of medium height. he had lost his hat and was evidently out of humor. His lips were compressed and eyes flashing with anger.

"Can you use me in any capacity, General?" addressing himself to Gen. Getty,

"Who are you, sir?"

"Major McKinley of Crooks Command."

"Yes, I can," said the gentlemanly Getty. "Ride back and try to get as many of your men to rally. Tell them we are holding the ground untill [sic] they join us."

He turned the bay he was riding and as he passed me the blood from a bullet wound in his horse's flanks spouted at each respiration. I pointed it out to him. He was unaware of it. Thanking me, he dismounted, and led his horse to the rear. Five minutes later a tall bearded man galloped up and inquired for Major McKinley. I pointed him out in the distance. I saw he was a Brigadier General, but did not know untill [sic] years after that it was Rutherford B. Hays [sic?], both of whom in years after were presidents of the republic the[y] risked their lives to save.

We rested and compared experiences, criticized, praised, and eulogized the dead, and wondered what next. We moved to a new position one mile to our left, threw out skirmishers and built an excuse for a breastwork. We were cooking breakfast. Those that had the wherewithall were dividing with those who lost their rations in the strenuous times just passed when a cheer was heard away to our left and rear gathering volume as the cause of the outburst came nearer. What does it mean? Surely the enemy has not retreated, and except from [sic] an odd shot by the skirmishers, all fighting had ceased for two hours. The cheering Continued and increased in intensity when the cause appeared. A lone horseman rode down the rear of our lines, it was the gallant Sheridan, but what ever may be said by poets, aye[?], or historians, not a cheer greeted him from our division. We were smarting under our losses, and not knowing of his absence we naturally blamed him for our reverses. He gazed at the men curiously, who did not raise [sic] to

their feet or exhibit any enthusiasm. He looked as if the situation in regard to us puzzled him. The first sentences uttered by him caused a revulsion of feeling.

"Men, if I were here, this would never happen. I have just returned from Washington and arrived on the field ten minutes ago. We will whip all hell out of them before sunset and be back in our old camps again."

The soldiers jumped to their feet with a cheer, rifles and caps flung up in the air, tattered old battle flags shook out and waved on high by their gallant bearers.

"Lead on, Phill! We are with you!" It was a wild scene, and boded ill for Early's veterans when the manhood of the north met them again in battle array. It was plain from the flashing eyes and pleased but stern looks of Sheridan that he comprehended the cause of his reception at first but with his quick wit realized that it was really the highest compliment could be paid to his bravery and generalship. His absence was the cause of our defeat. His presence insured victory.

The afternoon wore on. To the old soliders it was a period of rest. The battle which assuredly had to [be] fought brought no fear or anxiety. To the recruits, of which we had several, it proved wearing. Their nerves were unstrung from the morning's encounter, they could not understand the lack of seeming fear exhibited by the veterans of many a hard fought field. They had not yet accepted the fatalist creed. Some of them never would, for the battle arena brought out a character strange and anolamous [sic], produced nowhere but in the crucible of war. Here a group were vitally interested in the misteries [sic] of draw poker--a group of Irish soldiers were engaged in their native game of forty fives. It was noisy over whether ace or king had precedence in robbing the deck head. Its all owing [to] what province of the four you was [sic] born in. If Ulster the King, if Munster its the ace does the trick. All the games were right if no money was

staked. There under the shade of some trees a sargeant had a squad of men initiating into the proper method of loading a cartridge in a rifle--so that the recruit would not get the bullet in first and the powder after, a thing that has happened hundreds of times--when the use of one rifle was sadly wanted. The religious man was not wholly wanting. Neither was he made a mock of. The consensus of opinion varied but generally agreed that, if you had not prayed before and made sure of a place on the golden stairs, the best thing you could do was to shoot straight, be true to the Union, and fight for the old flag to the death. Your salvation was beyond peradventure certain.

Staff officers were busy riding with orders to and fro. The presence of Sheridan threw life and vigor into all. There was no question of a master hand at the helm. Orderlies were utilized in every practical manner. There were systematic efforts in all directions, reorganization of regiments and batteries, the moving of most of our cavalry to the left flank, and the pushing foward of our skirmishers to close contact with the enemy.

Our loss in horses in the morning's fight left several regimental commanders without mounts so the order went forth to dismount orderlies, and give their horses to officers whose duty called for quick movements. So I turned over mine with bad grace to a brigade commander in the 3d division and reported once more as an infantry man with my old command or rather the remains of it, fully determined to stay there for the future. I was warmly welcomed on my return and took my old place in the ranks.

My regiment, the companies of which were decimated in the morning's fight, were consolidated into one company and attached to a sister battalion of the same state. They were lying behind a temporary rail breastwork at the foot of a wooded hill at right angles to the pike.

Our skirmish line were [sic] keeping up a dusultary [sic] sort of warfare above us. Men who came back for ammunition, informed us they, the Johnnies, were scarce a hundred yards in their front behind a stone wall.

"They are not a bit warlike. They look as if they wanted us to not bother them. I ain't seen a horter [sic?] of 'em for the last hour, but these are heaps of 'em there."

One of our boys climb [sic] a tree and says, "The rifles leaned up against the wall are ten to the yard. The men to use them are sleeping under the wall--except an odd one on guard and a few officers."

He cant account for so many rifles if there are not men to handle them. He believes they ain't there. The guns are a bluff.

"Hardly pard," said a grizzly veteran "I used the guns myself at Antietam, and they came in mighty handy in stopping a charge.

An incident which shows that even in the most strenuous times the American sense of humor prevails. From a little frame house in a hollow to our right an [sic] middle aged women tall and angular, homely of features, and dressed anywaws [sic] but fashionable sauntered up to where Col. Oleuth [?] was sitting and asked him with a great deal of asperity if he seen anything of her cow and young Calf, and if he had eat 'em, she wanted pay for em.

The Col. was a gentleman of the old school, who believed and acted that a woman in all circumstances had to be treated with deference due a lady, no matter her condition of life. Taking off his hat, he stated with a courtly bow, he was sorry to say he had no information as to the whereabouts of that useful quadruped at the present time or in the past, only he could assure the lady he or any of his men had not killed or eaten the aforesaid animal or its progeny.

"Wall, mister, I think you're telling the truth about the cow, but I don't own or neither does bossy anything like progeny. I suppose its some yankee animal that we don't know about here. If you would tell some of these yere young men of yourn to help me find her and get her home before you uns start another fight, I'd think more of you than all your fine talk and bowing and scraping amounts to. Bossy is out thar somewhere," pointing to the skirmish line. "The darned calf leaped out of the lot, and her fool mother had to follow her. Can I go up there? You tell your fool sogers to not shoot me please."

"Madam, its dangerous. Our men won't hurt you. The danger is from your own people."

"I don't care for them, scepting the[y] are hungry which they are all the time. So long, mister."

Away she went up the hill. We watched her as a picket stopped her. She pointed back to where the Col. was standing. He signaled to the soldier to let her pass. She discovered the cow close up to the wall where the enemy lay. She started both animals back. The cow was tractable but the calf was possessed of an evil spirit. When everything looked to success, the young rascal would kick up his heels, throw his tail in the air, and make off in [the] opposite direction. Of course, his mammy would follow suit, and the old woman would have to recommence the hopeless task.

A young soldier of ours hailed the enemy and asked them, if they would not shoot, he would help the women.

"Go ahead, yank," was the answer. Leaving his gun and waistbelt at a tree, he boldly and with perfect confidence joined the woman, The two were getting along famously when the calf started to renew his formar [sic] tactics. The soldier seen the move and profitting [sic] by what

the calf done formerly, threw his arms around the calf's neck. The struggle was on. The man was the stronger of the two until the cow came to the rescue of her offspring. She charged and rolled man and calf to the ground. He held on but the old lady unshipped her sun bonnet and attacked the cow vigorously, driving her off. The man kept his holt [sic]. It was a question yet to be decided which of the contestants would win the direction of their route when a Johnnie solved the problem by yelling out.

"Hey, yank, grab his tail and twist it. Now you got him!"

As our man drove his unwilling capture out of sight in the direction the woman went, each side cheered at the common victory.

Another in a different vein, exhibiting the commercial instinct, and in a lesser vein the power of the public press. A boy of 14 years rode along our lines with a pile of papers in front and rear of his saddle.

"Here's your New York Herald, Harpers Weekly, Baltimore Clipper, and Irish American. Only twenty five Cents a Copy as long as they last. One dollar for a new edition printing in the rear. Fullest and latest accounts from the seat of war. Colonel, don't you want to hear from the front? Sheridan's just arrived from Washington. Desperate battle fought near Middletown. Early utterly defeated and in full retreat for Staunton. Terrible losses of the Confederates. Ours are light."

"That newsboy is a little ahead of the hounds but I'm d\_\_\_ if we won't make it true all the same," said our Sargeant Major [sic]. The boy sold his papers--without "the extra;" and rode off to the cavalry.

"Ah, you boys don't believe anything till you see it. Now I can tell the cavaliers any kind of an old yarn and the'l [sic] follow it. Them horsemen ain't got half the sense the Lord allows them."

Such was his farewell as he rode away.

It was closing up to four O'clock when a sudden spurt of firing started on the left and slowly worked its way to our front. The enemy raised from behind their shelter and drove our skirmishers helter skelter from their front. We were in two lines, each brigade divided in even parts one supporting the other. With few orders and no noise we dressed our ranks and waited at the ready. Five minutes of tension, and the enemy put in no appearance. A staff officer rode swiftly up to our brigade commander and on to the Jerseys, on our right.

"Forward! The guide's right! march!"

Up through the woods we marched and debouched in to a clearing triangular in shape, and a scant hundred yards from the stone wall, behind which Gordon's Southerners were waiting in Comparative Security for our advance. Both sides fired simultaneously. Nothing appeared of them below the shoulder, whilst we were fully exposed in the open.

"Charge," rung along the line.

We made a rush which was quickly stopped for want of men to keep it up. The fire instead of decreasing from the wall, grew in intensity. It was a Continuous sheet of flame sending a hurricane of lead in our faces. Human endurance had passed the limit. A man or body of men with empty muskets could not withstand the torture. The bravest Could not be blamed for flinching from the awful storm. We threw ourselves on our faces amongst our slaughtered Comrades, aiming eventually to crawl to shelter in the woods. My gun was shattered at the lock

and the stock was in splinters. I got a gun from a dead Comrade, rolled over on my back and loaded. When I seen our supports coming up to join us, the fire of the enemy had almost ceased from some Cause, afterwards ascertained. The[y] were loading up their arsenal. Each man had from five to eight guns, picked off the battle field of the morning and ready to hand, leaning against the wall. They felt Certain they had stopped us, and were making preparations for any renewed attempts. As I got to my feet a field officer, splendidly mounted, rode through the interval between the 2d Com. Mich [? CHK] and my regiment. Raising [sic] in his stirrups, [he] pointed with his sword to the wall.

"Follow me, men of the 65<sup>th</sup>."

What was left of us, reinforced by the 121<sup>st</sup> N.Y., kept at the heels of his horse. He breasted the gallant bay and went clear over, never touching the rough coping of the fence--over we tumbled in every shape the 121<sup>st</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> P.V. [?] We had loaded muskets. It was our turn, and we used it. I don't think a half dozen men escaped to their rear--but our gallant leader Ranald S McKenzie, Col. of the 2d Cav. and then in Command of our brigade, was badly wounded, and his mount killed with a bayonet thrust in the heart. I and another pulled him from under his horse and pushed on. If there were few men to oppose us, we could get on the flanks of any Confederate Command that tryed [sic] to make a stand. We raced for the Camps and Creek to cut them off from their line of retreat. Fragments of their commands would try to make a stand, to be shattered and sent flying to the rear. A body of men south of Middletown made a stand for a few minutes, to be cut to pieces and shattered irre deemably [sic]. It was the last organized resistance made on that day, and at sundown in trying to get to the bridge over the Creek, I was badly wounded, picked up in the night by stretcher bearers, and landed in the field hospital at Newtown, where over six thousand men of both armies represented the price and the cost of victory and defeat.

John P. Brogan