

A BOY AT SHILOH.

(By Major Charles Morton, Fourth United States Cavalry.)

(CONCLUDED FROM LAST ISSUE.)

Here this paper should properly end, for its main object is to give some of the circumstances attending the attack and shoving back of the Sixth division. But as I desire to make a few comments on, I will not say criticise, the battle, and as my story is not long I will continue to presume upon your patience.

Our little party was soon approached by Captain Donnelly, the brigade adjutant, who demanded with some asperity to know why we had not obeyed the order to retire, directed us to do so, and pointed to the rear, towards Hurlbut's division as where our division was forming. We had simply heard no orders. We soon came to an open field, and as both flanks had been turned, to go to the right or left meant certain death or capture. We must cross the open ground. A few rods out, and whiz-whiz-whiz, the bullets cut the air. Zip-zip-zip, they ricocheted by our sides to the front. None hit me, but they excited wonderfully my power of propulsion, and I believe my fortune would be assured as a sprinter now if I could only find some equally effective promoter of locomotion.

Behind a high rail fence, on low ground in dense underbrush, we found the remnants of the regiment and brigade assembled in line. Soon a terrific artillery duel commenced from the enemy trying to shell us from the position. We were supporting a 20-pounder battery, always referred to by men as the "black-gun" battery (probably Welker's of the First Missouri). Its manipulation and manœuvring were truly marvellous, and brought forth time and again cheers that sounded above the roar of battle. As a battery, or deployed by platoons, section, or pieces, it would deliver fire; and the limbers, drawn by eight strong horses, would seem to bound to the rear, cannoners spring to their places, and fly away at breakneck speed, regardless of trees, logs or other obstacles, to a new position. Hardly would they leave the firing point, when a grist of shot or shell would come screaming through the air, to find them gone. These projectiles usually went high, playing havoc with limbs and tree-tops, that showered upon us, once completely enveloping a number of men, who crawled from under, midst the laughter of all near. I saw one of the enemy's guns end-up and keel-over, and other confusion caused by our guns. Meanwhile we had changed position several times, and the enemy, unseen, had massed an enormous force close by. We occupied, for a time, a sunken road that traversed a ridge, but finally moved straight to the front in line, the centre in a dim road, Major

Powell commanding, in advance of the colors, but walking backwards. We were soon upon the enemy, formed in such close order as to appear simply as a vast multitude. Note again, no skirmishers in advance. The major, turning to the front, saw the enemy, and realizing the critical situation, waved his sword, and commanded, "To the rear, march!" falling, as did also the color-bearer, from the volley we received. Sergeant Simmons rushed up and grabbed the flag, and four or five of us dragged Major Powell away. A few hundred yards to the rear we put him in an ambulance. He enjoined us to return to the firing line and to do our best, that every man was needed. He was shot in the side, and died that night, patriotic, cool and brave to the last.

We found the firing line in the sunken road mentioned, which was about fifteen inches or more deep, affording excellent cover and good rest while firing. For a short distance to the front there was an undergrowth of hickory and oak, not yet leaved out, so we could see and aim through it, but so dense as to conceal our line at a few yards. We held this position for hours, pouring a deadly fire upon the enemy, and repulsing every attempt to dislodge us. The underbrush became wooden stubble, gnawed off by bullets. The road-bed, after the battle, had a carpet of paper from the cartridges we had bitten off. At the front one could walk on the enemy's dead for acres. This is literally true; and a large portion of the ground bore but charred remains, from a fire that had swept over it. Before the position was taken and many of the line captured, my ammunition being almost exhausted, I found there was not in sight a face I knew. A feeling came over me I cannot describe, a dread that if I were killed no one would know what had become of me, not even my brothers or parents. I deliberately walked away.

A few rods to the rear I saw the first evidence of general supervision of the battle, a wagon load of ammunition piled by the roadside—but none of it fit my musket. Soon I met my brother, John N., also hunting the regiment, which we found a little further on, in line across the road. It was nearly sunset.

To show in part the desperate fighting the enemy had to carry the sunken road, I will give a few extracts from the account written by Preston Johnston, son and aide-de-camp to the confederate commanding general, who lost his life in the last charge:

"When the confederate army reached Hurlbut's division and that of W. H. L. Wallace's, with a fragment of Prentiss', a giant contest began. * * * Hurlbut's men were massed in a position so impregnable, and thronged with such fierce defenders, that it won from the confederates the title of 'The Hornets'

Nest.' Here, behind a dense thicket on the crest of a hill, was posted a strong force, as hardy troops as ever fought. * * * For five hours brigade after brigade was led against it. Hindman's brigade, which earlier in the day had swept everything before them, were now reduced to fragments, and paralyzed for the rest of the day. A. P. Stuart's regiments made fruitless assaults. Gibson's brigade was ordered by Bragg to the assault, and made a gallant charge, but, like the others, recoiled and fell back with very heavy loss. Bragg ordered them again to the charge, and again they suffered a bloody repulse. This bloody affray lasted till nearly 4 o'clock, p. m., without making any visible impression upon the federal centre. * * * When General Johnston came up, and saw the situation, he said to his staff: 'They are offering stubborn resistance here. I shall have to put the bayonets to them.' * * * His hat was off; his presence was inspiring as he sat on his thoroughbred bay. His voice was persuasive; his words were few. He said: 'Men, they are stubborn. We must use the bayonet.' When he reached the centre of the line, he turned and said: 'I will lead you,' and moved toward the federal lines. With a mighty shout the line moved forward at a charge. A sheet of flame and a mighty roar burst from the federal stronghold. The confederate line withered, but there was not an instant's pause. The crest was gained. General Johnston had his horse shot in four places; his clothing was pierced with bullets, and his bootsole was cut by a minie-ball. The federal soldiers kept up a continual fire as they fell back on their reserves, and delivered volley after volley as they sullenly retired. A minie-ball from one of these did its fatal work. As he sat there after his wound, General Harris returned, and finding him very pale, asked him: 'General, are you wounded?' He answered in a very deliberate and emphatic tone, 'Yes; and I fear seriously.' These were his last words."

About dark the head of Buell's army, led by a brass band playing merrily patriotic airs, marched upon this field of carnage. This made a deep impression upon all. After dark our shattered battalion was marched for rations inside the intrenchment constructed by Colonel Webster, and then marched out again. We had had nothing to eat all day. Though exhausted from fatigue and rain, the firing of the gunboats at short intervals all night made sleep without shelter or blankets impossible. At dawn we were in the midst of the slain, and learned for the first time how far the enemy had turned our left, how near he had approached the landing, and how desperate and bloody had been the contest near our base. Many of us sat upon dead horses while we ate our breakfast of hardbread and raw bacon. Near us were six confederate dead, killed by a