

SHERIDAN'S RIDE BY AIDE

Story of that Winchester Thriller Told by a Participant.

ANNIVERSARY OF GREAT EVENT

S. S. Peters, Who Rode with "Little Phil" that Memorable Day, Describes the Historic Episode.

"While every loyal and patriotic American rejoiced in the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, Va., Tuesday," said E. A. Parmelee at army headquarters, "yet October 19 was also the forty-fifth anniversary of the most dramatic episode of the civil war, Sheridan's ride."

"It has a peculiar interest to me because I was at the time a member of Colonel R. B. Hayes' regiment, the Twenty-third Ohio, which received the brunt of Early's attack that morning at Cedar Creek. Hayes also commanded a brigade during the battle, and it was his gallantry in holding Early's victorious forces in check that saved the Nineteenth corps from a complete rout and made it possible for the coming of Sheridan later in the day to rally the retreating union army."

"I was not directly engaged in the battle, having been laid up from a severe wound a few weeks before. But the story of the fight and the part that the Twenty-third Ohio took in it is a part of the treasured history of that regiment. General John C. Cowin, now of Omaha (he was Private Cowin then), was also a member of the Twenty-third, as was the late President McKinley, the latter then holding the rank of major in the regiment."

Time of Arrival Disputed.
A controversy has recently been awakened regarding the time that General Sheridan arrived on the field at Cedar Creek. Many held that he did not reach Cedar Creek until shortly after 3 o'clock, while others claim he was on the battlefield at 9 o'clock or 11 o'clock in the morning. Possibly each of these contentions is right, depending upon the part of the battlefield he reached at these respective hours.

The writer, S. S. Peters, happened to be a part of General Sheridan's escort that morning and accompanied "Little Phil" down the Shenandoah pike. The Sixth United States cavalry was made the headquarters escort to General Sheridan when he took command of the cavalry division of the Army of the Potomac in the summer of 1864, and remained as such during the entire war following.

General Sheridan had been called to Washington after the battles of Fisher's Hill and Opequan creek, for consultation with General Halleck. He returned to Martinsburg from Washington early the morning of October 19 and reached Winchester at 7 o'clock that morning. The escort was waiting for him at Winchester.

Desultory Firing Heard.
Some desultory artillery fire was heard from down the valley, but Sheridan, supposing it to be but a reconnaissance, did not pay much attention to it at the moment. He then rode leisurely down the road to Mill Creek, accompanied by his staff and the escort, a distance of probably four miles. He reached Mill Creek about 8 o'clock, and then realized that a big battle was in progress down the road. Some of the retreating troops, with transportation, were already pouring into Mill Creek, and Sheridan, hastily calling a small escort of twenty men to follow with his staff (this escort being of the Sixth cavalry, with one or two New York and Pennsylvania cavalrymen), the party started down the road on a gallop. Sheridan was naturally in the lead and for awhile carried a cavalry guidon, and as he passed the rapidly augmenting retreating forces he asked, "What men are you?" and waving the guidon at them called them to come on. "Come on, boys, we'll whip 'em out of them yet."

Ride Eleven and Half Miles.
The ride from Mill Creek to where the first line of the Sixth corps was encountered was just eleven and a half miles. A number of toll gate poles had been pulled down and chained by the retreating troops and the escort had to cut or break these poles away in order to get through. In one instance the toll gate pole was so stubborn that the escort had to tear down a big section of fence so that they could get round back of the toll house and onto the road again. These delays occupied probably fifteen or twenty minutes in the eleven and a half miles' ride.

The whole time of the ride, including delays, from Mill Creek to the Sixth corps line occupied probably an hour and twenty minutes.

Just before reaching the Sixth corps line a group of officers, among them General George A. Custer, rode up to meet the party with their staffs and escorts. Custer sang out with a cheer, "It's Sheridan, boys."

In the meanwhile a number of scattered troops had fallen in line along the pike and recognizing Sheridan cheered to the echo and began singing "Glory, Hallelujah."

Bully! Replies Sheridan.
"What troops are these?" asked Sheridan. Someone sang out, "It's the old Sixth corps. We are all right."
"Bully!" replied Sheridan. "Get right at them, boys. We have got them going now. We will sleep in our old camp tonight."

The presence of Sheridan thrilled the entire army and cheering could be heard to the right and left. "Sheridan's here, Sheridan's here,"

General Sheridan remained on the Sixth corps line but a few moments, gave some hurried directions for the disposition of the troops, and rode off in a gallop to other parts of the field followed by his staff and escort, repeating his orders and giving hope and cheer to the scattered commands that were now rallying.

The day was saved and it was Sheridan's presence that saved it.

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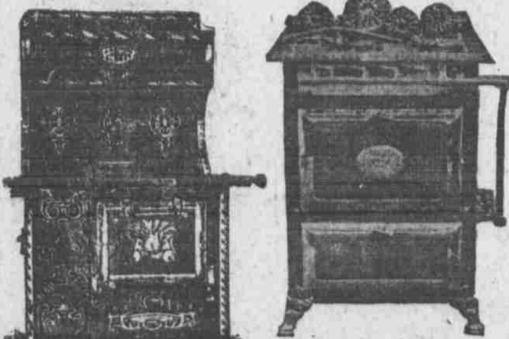
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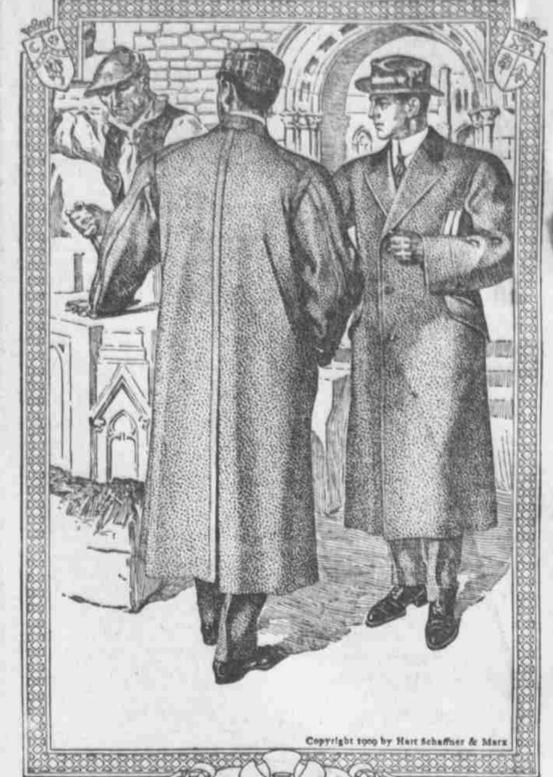
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