

No. 416.

*Report of Col. R. H. Keeble, Twenty-third Tennessee Infantry.*HDQRS. TWENTY-THIRD TENNESSEE REGIMENT,
September 28, 1863.

SIR: On the morning of the 17th, our brigade, being at or near Ringgold, Ga., was ordered to be in readiness to move upon the Ringgold road. Having moved upon the road toward Ringgold, about 2.30 or 3 o'clock we were informed that the enemy were on the opposite (north) side of Ringgold and advancing upon the place. Hastening the march, we formed line of battle on the south side of Ringgold, my right resting upon the left of the Twenty-fifth Tennessee, the Seventeenth Tennessee being upon my left. I formed in a skirt of woods facing town, and immediately threw forward skirmishers on the opposite side. The enemy, however, were repulsed with our artillery, and we remained in position quietly until next morning.

On Friday, the 18th instant, I took up the line of march, left in front, following the Seventeenth Tennessee. We followed the enemy in the direction of Chattanooga, and found them near the junction of the Graysville and La Fayette and Ringgold and Chattanooga roads. At this point I formed line of battle along the Graysville and La Fayette road, the Twenty-fifth being on my right and Seventeenth Tennessee on my left. We formed about 10 o'clock in the morning and moved upon them in line of battle, skirmishing with them all the way until we reached the Chickamauga River.

Before reaching the river, however, the Seventeenth Tennessee was detached and moved to support a battery, thus throwing my regiment upon the extreme left of the line, coming to open space in front of the river, my left resting upon the road running across the bridge. My skirmishers were now hotly engaged with the enemy at the bank of the river, and I was suffering from the effects of the enemy's fire, when all at once, without a command, the regiment with one accord charged the river and bridge at double-quick and put the enemy to flight. My skirmishers were immediately ordered across the river and thrown forward. I then moved by the left flank across the bridge and immediately formed line of battle upon my left company, the Twenty-fifth Tennessee forming upon my right when across. The brigade then moved by the right flank 300 or 400 yards and halted, the Seventeenth in the meantime having crossed and formed upon my left. We then advanced in line 300 or 400 yards, and made a left wheel over the crest of a hill where it was supposed the enemy had rallied. They had, however, left the field. We then moved by the left flank, left in front, about 3 miles, when information was received that the enemy were in our front and to our right. We then moved by the right flank (throwing us in line of battle) about 300 yards; changed front forward upon left battalion (Seventeenth Tennessee), and rested upon our arms during the night.

We had on this day 28 officers and 158 non-commissioned officers and privates, and lost in the charge upon the bridge 5 non-commissioned officers and privates, among whom was the color bearer (Private A. Melton), wounded in the leg. This brave soldier wept when he had to part with the colors, and said to the one who took them up, "Carry them through the thickest of battle ahead of everything else."

On Saturday, September 19, having slightly changed position so as to occupy the crest of a small hill, we lay in line pretty much all day under the fire of the enemy's artillery and sharpshooters until about 2 o'clock, when we were ordered forward and met the enemy, driving them across the road and a skirt of woods and open field. They had been driven from the field; two pieces of this [their] artillery upon my right and the left of the Twenty-fifth Tennessee were silenced and abandoned. We were, however, unable to take the guns off, and it is thought some other brigade or division took possession of them.

Having crossed the open field and the enemy having fled from before us, we halted to reform our lines. It was then discovered that there was no brigade on our left, and the enemy being upon our left flank and in rear of the left wing of the Seventeenth Tennessee, necessitated our falling back across the road, which we did and reformed speedily. Here we rested upon our arms during the night, and thus closed the Saturday's action. We fought them from 2 o'clock until late in evening.

I carried into action on this day 28 officers and 149 non-commissioned officers and privates, and lost in officers 1 killed and 5 wounded; in non-commissioned officers and privates, 5 killed; wounded and captured, 58.

Maj. J. G. Lowe was seriously wounded on this day while nobly discharging his duty, and only escaped being captured by his forethought and prudence.

Sunday morning, September 20, the formation of the brigade stood as before, my regiment being upon the left of the Twenty-fifth Tennessee and right of the Seventeenth Tennessee. The action commenced about 7 o'clock in the morning and became general about 10 o'clock, when we were ordered to advance. I immediately engaged the enemy with my skirmishers, and came upon their line on the opposite side of the road, when they fled in confusion before our sudden and impetuous charge. Moving a short distance by the right flank, we again moved forward and came on another line strongly posted in a cedar grove or thicket. Here I engaged them about ten or fifteen minutes, when we drove them in confusion out of the glade across the open field to the crest of a hill where their artillery was planted, and, pressing rapidly forward, utterly routed them. In this charge I passed by a house in which the enemy had been posted across the yard and garden. It was in this charge that Lieut. Col. Horace Ready was wounded while gallantly doing his duty.

Having pressed forward to the top of the hill, we discovered that the enemy had fled in the wildest confusion and dismay from their third strong position, leaving in their hasty flight knapsacks and baggage, several wagons laden with commissary and quartermaster's stores and ordnance, several pieces of artillery and caissons, some of which were capsized in their confusion. Several prisoners also fell into our hands. It is estimated that some 8 or 10 wagons and 5 or 6 pieces of artillery, with caissons, fell into our hands, and which we had no opportunity of removing until next morning.

Having halted and reformed upon the hill, which we had at last driven the enemy from, we changed direction to the right by brigade wheel, in which maneuver I passed down the hollow and into a corn-field in the bottom and to the right of the hill we had just left. Here we halted some fifteen or twenty minutes, I suppose, until a battery could be put in position on a hill then immediately in our

front. I then moved forward with the rest of the brigade to the foot of the hill, and while our battery was playing upon the enemy, replenished our ammunition from the enemy's ordnance wagons which had fallen into our hands. The enemy having advanced to capture the battery, we were ordered forward to resist them.

It was now about 1 o'clock. Having charged the enemy, I engaged them about fifteen minutes, when, the right having given way and the enemy overlapping on my left, I fell back with the rest of the brigade under the brow of the hill. I then moved by the right flank, throwing my regiment on the right of the battery, it before being on the left. A brigade was then moved to extend the left of our line and one thrown in our front.

It was now about 2.30 o'clock, when the brigade in our front charged the enemy and we were ordered to their support. Upon our advance the brigade in our front retired to our rear, leaving nothing but the enemy before us. Here commenced the most desperate conflict of the day. For three hours and forty minutes it raged most furiously. With our small band, whose ranks were becoming every moment thinner, we charged the full columns of the enemy and drove them before us, but drove them only to rally again, and in their turn charge us. Four desperate assaults and charges were made upon us, hurling upon us their immense columns, line after line, but as stubbornly were they resisted.

The battle-field here baffled description. The most vivid description of Waterloo would fail to depict. Leonidas with his 300 never withstood such desperate assaults and charges. Both sides felt that this was the turning tide of the battle. Hold it, and the victory was ours; lose it, and the tide of battle would change and all our previous advantages be lost. Night was now coming on; our ammunition was failing, the men, some of them, having but one round—none of them exceeding three; guns had been shot and injured, and more becoming foul and useless.

Foreseeing this danger, myself, with every other field officer of the brigade, begged and besought a brigade which was skulking behind trees in our rear to come forward and give but one volley. Alas! they heeded not the call. We looked in vain for other supports; none were near. The anxiety of the moment was terrible. Solitary and alone we were to fight that fight, and had then nothing upon which to rely but the individual valor and courage of our brave men.

The time had now come for something decisive. When I gave the command "forward, charge," with a terrible yell the men sprang forward—all, alas, that were left of them—the other regiments acting in concert. The enemy were routed from our front and fled in the wildest confusion. Pursuit was useless; they were far beyond our reach. Firing now ceased; my line reformed; I filed to the right, following the Twenty-fifth Tennessee, and your brigade was reformed, forming upon the left of a brigade which came up in our rear before the firing ceased. I then changed direction to the right. The brigade having made a wheel, reformed on a line perpendicular to the one we occupied during the evening engagement, and rested in this position during the night.

I cannot give too much credit to the men and officers of my command. I am happy to report that not one failed in his duty or straggled from the battle-field.

I carried into this day's action 22 officers, and lost 1 killed and 5 wounded; 86 non-commissioned officers and men, and lost in killed

5, wounded and missing 18, 7 out of the number having been detailed during the engagement to man a battery. Some of the wounded have since died, and some few of the slightest have again returned to duty in the regiment, though scarcely able.

My loss through the three days (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) was 12 officers and 91 non-commissioned officers and privates; aggregate, 103.

Every member of the field and staff were struck. Lieutenant-Colonel Ready and Major Lowe nobly did their duty until wounded. Adjutant Gwyn rendered valuable services on this occasion, and Private Ridley (ex-captain), the soldier without bounty, displayed that extraordinary zeal and valor which entitles him to the highest consideration. Second Sergt. J. J. Shelton, Company D, distinguished himself for his great coolness and readiness. Z. P. Lee, of Company C, and Aaron Todd, of Company H, privates, both displayed the highest degree of heroism by refusing to leave the field after they were wounded, but continued to battle on as long as they were able. Private J. D. Jeffries, color bearer, displayed the highest degree of courage and extraordinary degree of valor in the manner in which he bore the colors. Always far in advance, he would move it defiantly in the very face of the enemy. Lieutenant Vernon, of Company B, deserves especial mention for the manner in which he bore himself.

Most respectfully submitted.

R. H. KEEBLE,

Colonel, Comdg. Twenty-third Tennessee Regiment.

[Lieut.] R. G. CROSS,

Acting Assistant Adjutant-General.

No. 417.

Report of Lieut. Col. R. B. Snowden, Twenty-fifth Tennessee Infantry.

HDQRS. TWENTY-FIFTH TENNESSEE REGIMENT,

In the Field, near Chattanooga, September 28, 1863.

SIR: On the 17th instant, my regiment was encamped, with the balance of Johnson's brigade, about 3 miles south of Ringgold, on the Ringgold and Dalton roads. Here we received orders to move at 2 p. m. to a new encampment nearer Ringgold. The brigade was put in motion about 3 p. m., the Twenty-fifth Tennessee Regiment in front.

On approaching Ringgold we met a large number of wagons in a complete state of rout, the drivers and officers in charge of the train reporting the enemy in Ringgold. My regiment being some distance in advance of the balance of the brigade, I pushed forward to Taylor's Ridge, and took position on the slope with a view to protect the retreat of the train, which was still passing. I threw out a company as skirmishers to an elevated position on my right flank. After getting my regiment into position some 400 or 500 yards from the depot in Ringgold, I proceeded to an elevation and discovered that the enemy had not reached Ringgold, but was forming line of battle about 2 miles northwest of the depot. I discovered their artillery being placed in position, and everything showed that they