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MILITARY ESSAYS

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signal officers of the Fifteenth Corps. They were riding fast, evidently going to Giles Smith's division, and must have been near the General when he was fired at. I found General Logan on the railroad near De Gress' battery, and gave him McPherson's order. He at once directed General Wangelin to proceed to the point described, and to take the position indicated by McPherson.

When, however, we reached the crest of the hill, near the point where the road so often referred to entered the woods, and along which the brigade would have to move by the flank, the condition of affairs had materially changed. The enemy had a battery in position, and was sweeping the road with solid shot and shell; and it would have been utter folly to attempt at that time to put the brigade into the gap.

I said to General Wangelin that I would at once go to the left of the Seventeenth Corps, where I supposed McPherson to be, and where he had told me to meet him, and ask for further instructions. As it was impossible for me to get to Giles Smith's division by the road, I made a *détour*, crossing some cornfields, and finally gaining the dense timber to the rear of the left flank of the Seventeenth Corps. When within two hundred yards of the timber, I saw McPherson's horse staggering about, and evidently wounded. The saddle and equipments bore the marks of three bullets, and the horse was struck in two places. About the time I reached the horse, a wounded soldier came out of the woods near by, accompanied by another soldier, unhurt. Seeing me, they asked if I was not an officer of McPherson's staff, and upon my returning an affirmative reply, said that the General was dead, and that they had a few minutes previous left his remains; and to corroborate their statement they showed me and gave into my possession an empty pocket-book, a knife, a bunch of keys, and a number of other articles which I at once recognized as belonging to McPherson. The wounded soldier was George Reynolds,

Company D, Fifteenth Iowa Infantry; and the other was Joseph Sharland, Sixty-fourth Illinois Infantry. They both volunteered to guide me to the spot where the General's body was lying, but said it would be impossible to get to it and get it out from that direction, — that we would have to go back and go in by the road. Immediately I retraced my steps, accompanied by the two men, and soon reached the open fields where General Wangelin's brigade was still in position awaiting orders. I here met Captain D. C. Buel, Chief Ordnance Officer of our army, who volunteered to make the attempt with me to recover the General's remains. General Wangelin gave us a four-mule ambulance, and we proceeded without delay through the woods to the road upon which the General was riding when killed. The firing had ceased at this time, and we resolved to make a dash in with the ambulance and to bring off the General's remains if possible. Our party consisted of Captain Buel and his orderly, myself and orderly (George Taylor, Company D, Twelfth Wisconsin), George Reynolds, Joseph Sharland, and the driver of the ambulance (name unknown). Reynolds and Sharland rode in the ambulance. We dashed in on this road, and down it as fast as the animals could carry us, and were soon near the point where Reynolds thought the body lay. The ambulance was turned quickly about, and the mules headed out.

Buel and I dismounted, our orderlies holding the horses. Buel and Sharland, revolvers in hand, walked down from the ambulance, and promised to watch the road and protect the ambulance, while George Reynolds, weak and faint as he was from loss of blood, guided me through the dense thicket and underbrush to the spot where McPherson's body lay. We found it about twenty or thirty yards from the main road. The General was lying upon his back, quite dead, his head resting upon a blanket which Reynolds had placed there. His hat, watch, sword-belt, and field-glass were missing; and the

book which he carried in the side pocket of his blouse, which contained memoranda, papers, telegrams, etc., was also gone. His buckskin gauntlets had not been removed, and a diamond ring still remained on the little finger of his left hand.

Raising his body quickly from the ground, and grasping it firmly under the arms, I dragged it, with such assistance as Reynolds could offer, through the brush to the ambulance, and with the aid of the other members of our party deposited it therein, and then we all went out as we went in, "on the keen run." When we reached a safe position, the ambulance was stopped, and the General's remains were placed in a proper position; his limbs were straightened, his arms folded upon his breast, his head tightly bandaged and supported upon a blanket. And thus we carried to General Sherman's headquarters all that remained of the gallant soldier and beloved commander of the Army of the Tennessee.

General McPherson was killed or mortally wounded between half-past twelve and two o'clock, and probably in less than one minute from the time I left him in the execution of his orders.

The enemy, shortly after I passed over the road from the interview with Generals Blair and Giles A. Smith, had advanced his line, found the gap between the corps, and had possession of and controlled the road, a regiment of infantry having been thrown diagonally across it; and General McPherson must have ridden within fifty feet of the Rebel line before he discovered it. He was called upon to surrender by an officer standing near the line; but the only response he made to this demand was to raise his hat politely, bow, and rein in his horse to the right, evidently hoping to escape by gaining quickly the thick timber and underbrush which was close at hand. Lieutenant Sherfy, following quite closely in the rear of General McPherson, saw his move-

ments as herein described, saw the enemy fire, and saw him fall from his horse. Captain Howard also saw the enemy fire the fatal volley, but did not see the General fall. General McPherson's orderly, A. J. Thompson, was captured, and remained a prisoner of war over nine months. He was a member of the cavalry escort attached to our headquarters, which was under command of Captain Foster of Ohio. Thompson now resides at or near Georgetown, Ohio. His account of the General's death is substantially as follows: —

“ All at once the Rebels rose up on our left, and cried ‘ Halt ! halt ! ’ General McPherson turned quickly from them to the right, and I followed. Just as we turned, they fired a volley at us. I dodged down, and hung on to the side of my horse, and several balls came so close that they fairly blistered the back of my neck. They shot over me and killed the General. I saw him fall, and just as he fell, his horse ran between two saplings, and my horse after the General's. My head struck one of the saplings, knocking me off my horse, senseless. When I came to, McPherson was lying on his right side, with his right hand pressed against his breast, and at every breath he drew, the blood flowed in streams between his fingers. I went up to him and said to him, ‘ General, are you hurt ? ’ He raised his left hand and brought it down upon his left leg and said: ‘ Oh, orderly, I am, ’ and immediately turned over on his face, straightened himself out, trembling like a leaf. I stooped to turn him over, when one of the Rebels who had come up caught hold of my revolver strap and jerked it until he broke the buckle, at the same time calling me rough names, and ordered me to go to the rear quick, or he would shoot me. I know nothing further.”

Lieutenant Sherfy's statement is as follows, —

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “ INDIANAPOLIS JOURNAL ” :

I see in yesterday's Journal an account of the killing of General McPherson, taken from Rebel sources, which is incorrect in some particulars ; and as I was nearer to him

than any one else at the time he received his death-shot, I will give you a brief account of the occurrence as I saw it.

On the 21st of July, 1864, General Sherman made an advance of his own line in front of Atlanta, driving the enemy from an outer line of fortifications, which we held that night, the Seventeenth Corps being on the left, with its extreme flank returning like the point of a fish-hook, the Fifteenth Corps coming next, and the Sixteenth being partly in the reserve.

On the morning of the 22d, Lieutenant Stickney of the Signal Corps, and others on the skirmish line reported heavy bodies of the enemy moving to our left, when General McPherson took the Sixteenth Corps to the left, getting them in line just in time to meet the first Rebel charge across an open field, which was handsomely repulsed; this occurred soon after twelve o'clock.

Just after this I rode into the woods to the right of the Sixteenth Corps, in which the left flank of the Seventeenth terminated, where I found the skirmishers being driven back through this gap between the two corps, which fact I at once reported to General McPherson, who was just riding up, accompanied by an orderly, his staff having been sent to different parts of the field.

He at once turned his horse and started at a brisk canter in a narrow road, cut through the bushy wood, in the direction of the rear of the Seventeenth Corps, I and his orderly following as close as our horses could move, and members of the Signal Corps at a distance of twenty or thirty yards. We had gone perhaps a hundred yards when we rode upon a body of Rebels, of whom we could see about a dozen within ten yards of us, who commanded, "Halt! stop there! halt!" Without a moment's hesitation, the General turned his horse to the right away from them, and I followed his example.

At this instant the Rebels fired a volley at us, one ball striking the General, passing through his lungs near his heart. His horse carried him a short distance, when he fell heavily to the ground.

A moment afterward two infantry skirmishers, one of whom was wounded, coming by, stayed with him. They reported

his only words were, "My hat! where's my hat?" and a call for "water," which they furnished. After about twenty minutes he expired. In the mean time two or three Rebels came to where he was lying, and inquiring who he was, took his pocket-book and some papers from his breast-pocket, his watch, hat, and a signal-glass which he had borrowed that morning.

Near where the General fell, my horse dashed me against a tree, knocking me to the ground, insensible. As soon as I recovered strength, I escaped to the edge of the woods, and reported what had happened to some members of his staff, who were looking for him, who went in, and after a brief skirmish, bore his body out, and took it to the rear in an ambulance.

The signal-glass which was taken from the General was that evening found on the body of a dead Rebel, with a bullet-hole through the strap, and is now in the possession of Colonel Howard, to whom it belonged. My watch, which was crushed in my contact with the tree, was stopped at two minutes past two o'clock.

Yours Truly,

(Signed)

WILLIAM H. SHERFY,

Late Signal Officer of Fifteenth Army Corps.

GREENCASTLE, IND., July 8, 1875.

George Reynolds's story was substantially as follows: Shortly after the attack on Colonel Hall's brigade (left of Seventeenth Corps), he had received a severe wound in the left arm, a musket-ball shattering the bone at the elbow, and of course utterly disabling him. In going to the rear to find the field hospital, he came across General McPherson, lying upon the ground, mortally wounded. He raised the dying General's head, placing it upon a blanket, tried to give him a drink of water from his canteen, and asked him if he had any message to communicate; but the General could make no reply, and died soon after. About the time of his death, while Reynolds was engaged in moistening his lips and bathing his fore-

head, showing him such attention and care as his wounded condition would permit, a straggler from the front came upon the scene. As soon as he learned from Reynolds the name of the dying officer, he asked if he had examined his pocket-book, and at the same instant drew it from the General's pocket and opened it. General McPherson had been paid for several months' service at Chattanooga, about the 4th or 5th of May, two or three days before the beginning of the campaign against Atlanta; and this money, rather a large sum, he had in his pocket-book in large bills at the time he was shot. The instant it caught the eye of the straggler referred to, he proposed to Reynolds to divide with him, saying it would be supposed by the General's friends that the enemy had had possession of his body and had rifled his pockets. This proposition young Reynolds indignantly spurned, and said to the man that he must instantly replace the money he had taken from the pocket-book, and that everything the General possessed must be sacredly guarded by them and delivered to his staff. With an oath the man replied, "Then I will keep it all, as you refuse to share it with me;" and casting the empty pocket-book upon the ground, and holding on to the money, he ran quickly away from Reynolds, who tried his best to restrain him, and disappeared in the woods toward the rear. Weak and faint as Reynolds must have been from loss of blood, he could do but little toward detaining this wretch and preventing the robbery. Soon after, Joseph Sharland came along and joined Reynolds. After remaining a few moments with the General's remains, they retired to the rear, and I met them at the edge of the wood, as before stated.

The enemy certainly had possession of General McPherson's body, and took from it his watch, sword-belt (the General wore no sword that day), field-glass, and the book containing his private papers. I am quite certain that these articles were taken by the Rebel soldiers imme-

diately after he fell from his horse, and before he died. Reynolds was with the General when he breathed his last, and the articles were then missing. All of them were recovered from prisoners taken during the afternoon, excepting only the watch. The bullet which killed the General passed through the strap which supported his field-glass, nearly severing it. Most, if not all, of the articles were recovered by the men of General Fuller's division. The day following the battle (July 23), General Dodge or General Fuller gave me the private papers which the General had on his person when killed, and among them was the last letter from General Sherman to McPherson, which I have given entire in this paper. They were sent to General Dodge by General Fuller the evening of the battle, with the following communication, which I now have in my possession.

I send this that General Sherman may know that they did not remain in the hands of the enemy long enough to be read. They were taken from a Rebel who had just been stripping General McPherson's body; another, who had the General's glass, was also taken. They were sent to the rear. If nobody objects, I should be obliged if General Dodge will return these papers to me.

(Signed)

J. W. FULLER,
Brigadier-General.

This settles the question as to whether the enemy had possession of the General's body. They did not search very closely, or they would have found the money and the ring.

When I found the remains, no article of clothing had been taken from them except the hat, and this may have been lost in the woods before the General fell from his horse.

Not enough can be said in praise of young Reynolds. Though dreadfully wounded, and weak from the loss of blood, he remained with the General until he died, and

did everything in his power to comfort and relieve him, refusing to go to the hospital or to have his wound dressed until we had recovered and brought from the field General McPherson's remains. As a slight reward for his bravery, and for his kindness to General McPherson during his last moments, the gold "Medal of Honor" of the Seventeenth Corps was awarded him by Major-General Blair, his corps commander. It was presented to him in the presence of his regiment under arms.

Upon our arrival at General Sherman's headquarters, which were still at the Howard House, the remains of General McPherson were removed to a vacant room and laid out upon a table, and the wound which caused his death was carefully examined by Dr. Hewitt, one of the surgeons of the army. The ball unquestionably struck the General in the back and ranged diagonally forward, coming out at the left breast and passing near the heart; but I think Dr. Hewitt expressed the opinion that he might have lived some minutes.

By direction of General Sherman, the remains were placed in an ambulance and sent to Marietta, *en route* for Clyde, Ohio, in charge of the General's personal staff, — Major Willard and Captains Gile and Steel.

I have before spoken of other officers of our army, besides Lieutenant Sherfy and Captain Howard, who were near General McPherson when shot. Those officers were Colonel R. K. Scott, commanding the Second Brigade of General Leggett's division, and Captain J. B. Raymond of General Leggett's staff.

The Sixty-Eighth Ohio, attached to Colonel Scott's brigade, had been ordered to the rear, on the evening of the 21st, as a guard for the Seventeenth Corps hospital, leaving a gap in Leggett's division which he was forced to fill by a skirmish line. At the first indication of an attack, about noon of the 22d, General Leggett directed Scott to send for this regiment and hurry it back to its proper position in the line. Colonel

Scott went in person, fearing some other command would seize it. About the time he reached the hospital he heard heavy firing on the left of the Seventeenth Corps; and giving orders for the regiment to join its brigade as quickly as possible, he rode rapidly back toward his command, passing down the road through the woods, and joining McPherson just as he reached the Rebel line which held the road. Colonel Scott's horse was killed by the volley fired at McPherson, and Scott himself was captured.

During the time that I was absent from General McPherson, carrying the order to Blair, Captain Raymond saw and spoke to McPherson. He passed down the road toward the left of the Seventeenth Corps in rear of him, ran into the enemy's line of battle or skirmishers, had his horse killed, was captured, witnessed the firing of the volley at McPherson, saw A. J. Thompson, the orderly, when he was brought back a prisoner, and learned from him that the General had been shot.

I copy here the account of McPherson's death given by Captain Beard, of the Confederate Army, who was in command of the company, Fifth Regiment, Cleburne's division, from which came the shot that killed the General.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "NATIONAL (TENN.) UNION AND AMERICAN":

I notice in your paper, and also in the "Banner" of the 24th, a letter from a correspondent at Shelbyville, connecting my name and also that of my company with the killing of Major-General McPherson, of the United States Army, in the battle of the 22d of July, 1864, before Atlanta. Both letters are substantially correct, with the exception of one important particular. The impression is made by your correspondent that we were detached at the time and in ambuscade, which is erroneous, for we were in line of battle with our regiment — the Fifth Confederate — and with Cleburne's division, to which we belonged. After my return from