

THE DAILY SENTINEL.

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(From the Newbern Commercial.)

"Reminiscences of the Battle of Spottsylvania."

Mr. EDITOR.—In the issue of the *Commercial* of yesterday, I see copied from the *Natchez Democrat*, an article with the above heading, which I know, does injustice to other troops engaged in that memorable struggle; and as it omits to mention the part taken by Ramsey's Brigade of North Carolinians, whom Gen. Lee, on the field, declared had saved the army, will you let an humble participant correct the error which he believes was unintentionally made in the article alluded to?

The morning of the 12th of May, 1864, will be ever remembered by us, and the mighty struggle of the day has made such an impression on our mind that its every ebb and flow will be indelibly fixed in memory as long as life exists. It was just such a morning as this, —dark, dusky, and threatening rain,—while a heavy fog enveloped the atmosphere. The evening before had witnessed a sharp and bloody encounter at the angle of our works that divided the divisions of Johnson and Rhodes, which was the weakest point on our line, and where Hancock's corps had succeeded in effecting an entrance, but were speedily repulsed by Gordon's and Johnston's Brigades, who were in reserve, in rear of the works. Darkness set in at the moment the struggle was ended at the breastworks, and the enemy were left in possession of the ground only a few rods in front, where a brisk musketry fire during the entire night gave evidence of their determination to hold that important point. It was immediately in rear of that point where Hancock massed his corps during the hours of night, and when daylight appeared, they moved forward, and with unbroken front, with hardly a show of resistance, seized the angle of the Confederate works, where the fight of the evening before occurred, and marching rapidly in rear of the line occupied by Johnston's Division, under cover of the fog, succeeded in surprising the entire division in their rear, while they were eagerly watching for a demonstration in their front. As soon as Hancock's corps had effected this surprise and had attained complete possession of this part of the line, they set up a loud huzzza, that first informed the startled Confederates, to the right and left of the disaster which had occurred, and the danger that threatened them. Gordon's Brigade of Georgians, and Johnston's Brigade of North Carolinians, were the only troops in reserve on our part of the line. They were quickly formed in line, and moved against the exultant foe, but without success, and finally retreated with scarce half the men they attacked with. It was in this effort that the brave Col. Garrett, of the 5th, N. C., fell with his face to the foe, and so many other prominent officers valiantly shed their life-blood in attempting to snatch victory from defeat. When this renewed disaster occurred, the enemy had, as open way in our rear, to the Court House, and there was not a single regiment to oppose them, and it was with grave and doubtful hearts that brigades from the line, manaced its entire length, were marched into to fill this unopposed vacuum. Rhodes' Division was the division immediately on the left of Johnston who had been surprised and overthrown, and already Rhodes' men on the extreme right were becoming demoralized, and fleeing to the rear. At this critical juncture Ramsey's Brigade of North Carolinians were the first to dispute the onward march of the foe. It was then past seven o'clock. The fog had arisen from the earth, and we could now plainly see the terrible disaster that had befallen us. The breastworks of Johnston were full of our enemies in blue, while three or four other lines were between them and us. It looked sheer folly for this handful of men to oppose that host. No reinforcements were to be had. Ere we pale and excited, vainly endeavored to rally the fugitives from the beaten brigades, and orders were sent in every direction for further aid. Already the enemy had perceived us, and were plowing cannon shots into our own ranks from the captured guns in the works. The hostile forces were preparing to advance. Finally, Gen. Lee arrived, and galloping to Ramsey's line told him "those works must be recaptured, or the day is lost." Well do I remember Ramsey's words and looks. Mounted on his horse, he faced to his brigade and in ringing tones told them what Gen. Lee had said, and asked them if they would go. A unanimous "yes" from right and left was the response. He gave the command "Forward!" the second battalion of direction 1st and as if on dress-parade, the entire line moved forward amid cheers, musketry, cannoneading and death. Not once did the brigade falter until it reached an incomplete line of works immediately in rear of the line taken from Johnston; there they delivered our volley, and rushed forward again, drove the enemy from the works in their front, and secured them to our forces. Here the brigade held its own aided, for over an hour, fighting an enemy in front, who attempted to retake the works, and who came in column by brigades, three or four deep, and at the same time were fighting an enemy on their right flank, from traverse to traverse. I never was in as severe a fire before, and it seemed as if even the breastworks were no protection, as shot and shell flew from every direction, and concentrated its deadly fire on our devoted heads.

About one hour after our success, the first succors came to our relief. It was Harris' Brigade of Mississippians, and singly and alone had we contended until then. We already had the works, and they did not storm them, but simply reinforced us, and side by side, with the Mississippians, we together held the works through the long hours of the day and night, and successfully repelled every effort made to retake the works by assault, after assault made upon the line. The fire was incessant the long day and night, and trees immediately in our rear, two and a half and three feet thick, were utterly blown down by minnie balls alone.

Gen. Ramsey and his brigade that day received the plaudits of all, and Gen. Lee was heard to say "that clever fellow Ramsey, and his noble brigade, had saved his army from disaster by this daring and successful charge." Ramsey's Brigade expended one hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition to the man during the day.

Among the heroes who fell in that struggle, Newbern gave her share. I remember the gallant bearing of Sergeant Atmore, of Co. I and Sergeant Cherry, of Co. K, 2nd N. C. Regiment, and saw them when they fell mortally wounded.

J. C. G.

(The Junior Editor of this paper had the honor to be Adjutant General of the gallant

DAILY SENTINEL.

"I WOULD RATHER BE RIGHT THAN BE PRESIDENT."—Henry Clay.

VOL. II.

RALEIGH, FRIDAY EVENING, AUGUST 31, 1866.

NO. 21.

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Aug. 24-64*

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