

THE Evening Messenger.



Vol. VII. No. 57

Washington, Beaufort County, N. C., Friday Afternoon, January 14, 1898.

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The Captured Flag.

MR EDITOR:—I have noticed in several late issues of your paper, statements to the effect, that the 4th N. C. Regiment lost her regimental flag, at Sharpsburg and that it was captured by the 5th New Jersey Regiment. This I think I can safely deny. The 4th never had her flag captured. I was a member of the 4th and participated in all the battles in which my regiment was engaged, except when I was wounded and in hospital I was present and participated in the battle of Sharpsburg, fought the 17th, of September, 1862. We were members of Brigadier General George B. Henderson's Brigade. The 2nd, 4th, 14th and 30th N. C. Regiments composed this brigade. The division to which the brigade belonged was commanded by Maj. General D. H. Hill, and the corps by Lieut. General Stonewall Jackson.

In the disposition for battle on the morning of September 17th, Anderson's Brigade formed the extreme right of Hill's Division, and our line of battle extended along an old country road; at some places the road bed was upon a level with the surrounding country, at others there were shallow depressions, caused by rains and the wear and tear of wheeled vehicles. A part of the 4th was in one of these depressions, though it proved to be of but little protection to the men. From our line of battle we could see the enemy advancing to attack us, as they emerged from a ledge of woods about eight hundred yards distant, in three distinct lines of battle and in splendid order. Our orders were not to fire until they were within thirty or forty yards of our line. The men were lying down in the road, and at the first volley the front line were almost annihilated, but the remaining lines continued to advance, and soon the battle became general and furious, and though opposed by three or four to one, they could not dislodge us from the road until late in the afternoon, when by a fatal mistake of another brigade commander they gained their desired object.

After several assaults upon our lines and failing to make any progress, it was discovered that they were attempting to turn our right flank, and the fire was constantly being passed down the line to look out upon the right by the officers, so we might be prepared to meet and check any move of this kind before it gained too much headway.

Brigadier Gen. Featherston's Brigade of Mississippians were ordered to take position on our right flank to check this movement, and in executing the order he failed to form his brigade far enough to our right, but instead advanced them to the position occupied by

Anderson's men, coming up immediately in our rear, and not seeing the men lying down in the road, his men began firing at the enemy over us, and no doubt killed and wounded many of Anderson's men. There were two brigades occupying the position intended for one, and at this stage of the battle the 4th had lost every commissioned officer, being either killed or wounded, and most of the non-commissioned officers, and with this general mix up and no guiding hand to direct, it is a wonder to me how we even managed to maintain order and discipline in our ranks. Just before Featherston's men reached our lines, and while firing over us I saw Lieut. W. H. Weaver, of Co. H, take the flag of the 4th, jump to his feet and wave it several times, when he knew it meant certain death to do so, to let Featherston's men know we were friends between them and the enemy, and dropped dead pierced by bullets, which I am confident were fired by friends.

As soon as Gen. Featherston discovered the mistake he had made gave orders to his brigade to retire so that he might take his proper position on our right. When this order was given though not intended for Anderson's men, they retired with them through a corn field immediately in our rear, about one hundred and fifty yards distant, to the outer edge of the cornfield, from the original line of battle.

Several of Co. I did not retire with Featherston's men, including myself, having not heard the order given by Gen. Featherston to his men, and I presume the other companies of the regiment did the same, until Bryant Peed came to me and stated that our brigade had fallen back. I noticed down the road and saw plenty of men in the road and did not go. He soon came to me again and said the men in the road were either dead or wounded. I looked again and saw that Peed was right, and that we must leave at once or be killed, or captured. So we left the road ran through the corn and found what was left of the 4th Regiment with their flag flying, forming in line of battle the men who were retiring, or had retired from the road. David R. Bennett and myself were the only members of Co. I, who left the road when we did, that reached the outer edge of the corn field unhurt. Now up to this hour the flag was not captured, and I saw no reason why it should or could have been captured afterwards, though the battle continued another day.

The troops who opposed us on the 17th of Sept., were Major's Irish Brigade, but I do not know what State they hailed from.

I do not remember who was Ensign at Sharpsburg, but was under the impression that it was John Stikeleather, until I saw his statement concerning himself in your paper. The captured flag will prove to be the company flag presented by the ladies of Washington to Capt. D. M. Carter's company, which in the organization of the 4th was Co. E. This flag was never carried into battle. I served in the 4th N. C. Regt., as a private soldier, non-commissioned officer and commissioned officer, and during the bloody campaign's of 1864 up to the 19th of Oct., when I was severely wounded and captured had the honor to command Co. I, which was flag company of the Regt.

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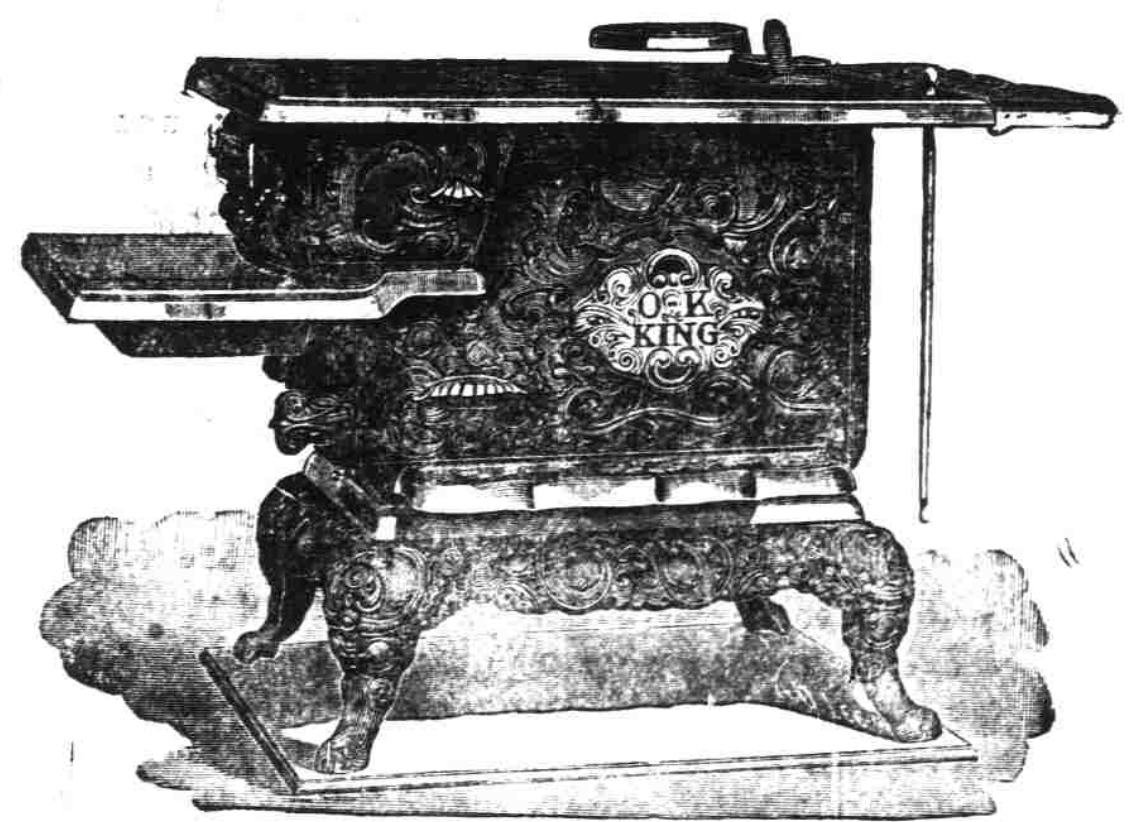
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