

PUBLISHERS' ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE DAILY JOURNAL, a 24-column paper, published daily except on Sunday, at \$2.00 per week, \$12.00 for six months, \$24.00 for a year in advance. Delivered to subscribers at 30 cents per month.

THE JOURNAL.

NEW BERNE, N. C., AUG. 10, 1882.
Entered at the Post office at New Berne, N. C., as second-class matter.

Dishonest Officials.

The Star Route trials that have been so long in progress in Washington have been a shame and disgrace to the nation. Whether they are found guilty or not by the jury, public opinion has long since given its verdict against them, and the virtue and intelligence of the country feel the disgrace keenly.

As a body, the officers of the United States, high and low, are doubtless as intelligent, honest and able, as any equal number of men in the country. But, unfortunately, there are exceptions to this rule.

There are "black sheep" among them, and very black ones, too, who have sought and obtained office for the sake of the money they could make out of their positions. When the lawful gains of these men have not been as rapid as they wished, they have not scrupled to stoop to fraud to increase their profits.

Wrong doing by public officers is a double scandal. It throws discredit not only upon the service in which they are employed, but upon the whole nation. When an official is detected in evil practices, the honest men in the same service suffer to some extent, by being classed with the rascal.

One could be sure that whenever a case of fraud by a public officer was detected, the guilty man would always be punished as he deserved, that would be some consolation. Such, however, is not the fact. Official dishonesty is, in a certain sense, entrenched knavery. The offender may be, and usually is, dislodged; but he fights at an advantage, and sometimes wholly escapes the penalty of his crime, and even retains office.

There are several reasons for this. One is, that nearly all officers get their positions and keep them by the use of influence, and not solely by their own merits. When they are attacked for dishonesty, the influence that has always befriended them comes to their aid, and often it is very powerful.

Dishonest officers, too, are very apt to make friends with the "mammon of unrighteousness," and that, too, comes to their rescue in the hour of need.

A third reason is, the great difficulty of producing absolute proof of wrong doing. Government knaves are too shrewd to commit frauds openly. If they are corrupt, if they accept bribes, if they make unlawful profit out of contracts, they do it all indirectly, or secretly, so that the illicit gains cannot easily be traced to their hands. Even if they are turned out of office on what is to most minds full proof of their guilt, many persons in the community still believe them to be innocent.

The difficulties, too, under which high officers, the superiors of those who are accused of crime, sometimes labor, are many. It does not follow that a man is guilty because he is accused. That is something to be inquired into and decided by the evidence. Those officers who are charged with the duty of investigating, perform their task under a heavy responsibility. They are likely to be accused of "white-washing," if they do not find enough proof to warrant them in discharging the supposed rascal;

and of injustice, if they do discharge him.

We have no doubt that rascality is much less common in official quarters than is usually supposed. The least taint of it, however, is a public disgrace, and good men should not tolerate it. They should never rest contented until the last trace of it is erased.

BROTHER "JOHNNY."

It was the third day of the battle of the Wilderness. Down to the southeast of our brigade, the thick pine woods enclosed the little opening in front of us, and there were the "Johnnies" in force under A. P. Hill. It was one of the few opportunities where artillery could be used in that battle, and five batteries swept and raked that belt of woods with shell, grape and shrapnel. Down went whole trees, toppling one across another, their trunks cut sheer off. Still the Confederates stuck there, half buried in branches and boughs.

Then the command "Charge!" was given, and we went for that woody belt—what was left of it—across the open stretch, at a headlong run, and rushed into the thick brush.

There we drew the enemy's fire. In our very faces came the smoke, so hot it fairly scorched.

We had no time to see who fell, but of the forty-seven men in my company, only twenty-one reported that night. There were the boys in gray right under our noses, crouched on the ground, with rifles aimed at us from over logs and from beside trees, and not an inch would they budge. Our line went over them like an ocean breaker.

I saw but two men run back from us. As we went with a loud hurrah, to carry and clear the woods. After passing a hundreds yards through the densest of the pines, we came to a much thinner growth, with clumps of old dead grass. Here the reserves of the Confederates and two or three batteries caught us on the fly—shells, rockets and grape, a terrific outburst from the left and in front, almost in our very faces!

With the first explosion I was struck by a fragment of shell on the right leg above the knee, which whirled me round so violently that I fell. For a minute my limb was numb. I sat up, and put my hands on it. The bone was broken, and there was a white, gaping wound where the blood gushed rapidly. With the first throbs of pain the crimson life-tide gushed out.

Such pain! It is an agony which none can know but the poor fellow who sees his good leg or arm lying, a piece of shattered flesh, before his eyes, and feels the awful hurt of a well-nigh mortal wound, while the blood gushes as if in a moment or two it would drain his heart. To save my life I bound a handkerchief quickly and tightly around the leg above the wound.

For an instant I writhed, then turned faint; so faint that I but dimly remembered the counter charge of the Confederates, and the wild yell with which they chased back our broken and routed line, leaping over me where I lay, like eager bloodhounds.

Following this I may, indeed, have lain unconscious for some minutes, for the next thing that I recall was the crackling and smoke of the burning pine brush and grass close by. Raising myself a little, I saw that all out to the right it was blazing like a furnace, and the men were running back through the smoke. The shells had set the woods on fire.

The roar and crackling grew louder; and then the horror of my situation burst upon me. Summoning all my strength, I tried, forgetful of my broken leg, to get up; but I fell back, too weak to even creep.

Nearer still roared and flamed the frightful fire. I shouted and prayed heaven. I envied even the poor fellows about me, who lay so still and did stir.

At last I got upon my hands and one knee and tried to crawl, but soon pitched forward on my face. Just then three "Johnnies" came hurriedly through the brush, stopping for an instant, here and there, to go through the pockets of our dead—as the custom was.

"Hallo here!" I heard. "Dead, you?" and one of them gave me a poke with his rifle-butt.

I tried to raise my head.

"Yes, that's hard; but got any greenbacks?" I shook my head; then, gathering strength, I partly turned. Two of the men had started on; the third stood in the smoke, regarding me for a moment. Fresh from the charge, his face and hands were smeared with powder-stains, and his clothes were torn.

"For mercy's sake," I cried, "drag me out of the brush, or kill me! Don't let me roast! Put a ball through me first!"

The fellow uttered an impatient oath. But I saw real pity in his face.

"Curse this bloody, hellish war!"

he exclaimed, and taking a step towards me, he cocked his rifle.

I shut my eyes, thinking that in another moment I should be out of pain,—in eternity,—for those boys in buttoned didn't often miss their man.

But instead, I heard, after a moment, his gun flung down. Then his arms clutched under me, and he took me up clear of the ground. I screamed with pain.

"Wal, I don't blame yer for yellin'!" he said, as he half-carried, half-dragged me along. Then, after stopping to catch breath, he said, "I reckon, Yank, I'd been kinder to yer to gin yer the bullet. Fer the doctors will be cuttin' and hackin' yer. Not a mite o' chloroform in our whole command, either, they say. And of yer do pull through, they'll chuck yer inter some of them blasted prison holes."

"Shoot me, then, and have done with it!" I gasped, for the fire was close on us.

But he lugged me on; and he was scarcely as heavy a man as myself. Every few rods he had to stop. The flames seemed spreading all around us, and every moment or two a shell would tear through the woods and explode, scattering fire, and whizzing fragments of iron everywhere.

He got me to a stone wall which skirted the woods on one side, and lifted me over it. There was a field with short green grass on the other side. Here he put me down, partly in the shade of a great ash.

"Thar, Yank," he said, "yer out of the fire, anyhow. Can't stay by yer, though. I must git my shootin' iron back thar in the brush, ef 'aint burnt up. But I'll tell yer what, Yank, I'll look round here to-night—ef I aint dead myself fore that time, and we hold on here."

"God bless you, Johnny!" I exclaimed; "but just one sip of water, if you've got it."

"Thunderation!" he muttered. "I aint got half a pint in my can, and don't expect to get another fill-up to-day!"

But he jerked off his canteen, took one swallow, and then put it into my weak hands. "Thar, drink, you poor sufferin' cuss! Yer may keep it, too. Hang on to it ef you can till I come round. Fer tin war's scarier than twenty-dollar bills in our corps, a darned sight!"

I felt him prop my head up with something—it was his old, worn, yellow-gray coat. The next moment he was gone—over the wall, back into the burning woods, after his gun.

I never saw him again. The Confederates did not "hold on" there, as all know who have read the story of that terrific struggle.

I say terrific, for it is quite the fashion with many of our brave stay-at-homes to say that when Grant took the command, Lee was already beaten, and all we had to do was to chase the Confederates to Richmond. It is but an ill tribute to the brave men we fought, or to the many or sixty thousand of our brave fellows who lie buried at Wilderness, Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor.

Our corps retook the ground. Later in the day I was found and taken to the rear.

Whether my Johnny, by whose Christ-like pity I was rescued, survived the succeeding battles of the campaign, or not, I do not know. Often since that day I have thought that I might have asked his name and regiment, but I was in no condition to think of that. To me he was simply a "Johnny"—but none the less a brother.

He saved my life, saved me from a horrible death; and that, too, in the brutal hurry and fury of battle, when I honestly can not say that I should have done so much for a Confederate lying there in my place. Only a soldier can really understand it.

I might not, as I have said, rescued Johnny if he had been in my place, but after that act, I should have done it at the risk of my life. That rough boy in buttoned taught me a lesson of the true brotherhood of man, that has influenced all my life since.

Had the war continued after I got well, I might have fought on from principle, but I should never have fired another bullet in malice; and I always feel as if I had a brother somewhere down South.

It will take more than any of the "bloody shirt" politicians can say, to make me forget the boy in gray who lugged me out of the burning woods at Wilderness.

The old battered canteen he left me I am still "hanging on to," as he requested. If he is living to-day, and "in-war" is scarce with him, he can have it; and with it, too, whatever else I can give that he may need more than I, for perhaps this little sketch may be the means by which I may hear from him.—*Youth's Companion.*

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