

Stuell

No. 15

Duplicate No. 15 - Grant Camp 1864

Suspect
The Georgia Campaign of 1864
1864 Rescue of the Oostanaula

Steel

No. 10

Report of the

Director

The Bureau of the Census

Washington, D. C.

111.--RESACA AND THE OOSTANAULA.

The partial discomfiture of Judah's division, early on the 14th, of May (1864), called for one of my divisions; ^{that} under General Newton, ~~as a reinforcement~~ *was sent to Judah's relief.*

Judah's loss had been very great. McLean's brigade alone, out of four thousand men, ^{had} lost about six hundred in that conflict. General John Newton, who has been doing grand engineering work in the vicinity of New York,-- no less than excavating and removing immense ledges of rock beneath the waters of the Hell Gate,--and is now at the head of our grand Corps of Engineers, is a man of diversified acquirements. He has a remarkably active brain, and I know of no one better able to provide against every probable contingency. *He was then equal to the emergency.*

One who was present says that General Newton's division steadily breasted the enemy, driving him back and causing him heavy losses, and that his men, counting out a few stragglers, kept their lines and behaved as old soldiers. Newton displayed here his usual tenacity, secured all the ground he could gain by a steady advance, and returned fire for fire until the fierce artillery and rifle fusillade diminished to a fitful skirmish.

If we ^{now} look along Palmer's corps to the right of Newton, we find Carlin's brigade, of R. W. Johnson's division, and Mitchell's brigade, of Jeff. C. Davis's division, doing the same thing as Newton,--pushing the enemy's skirmishers out of the thickets, seeking cover as they advanced, and by their rapid and effective fire silencing those batteries which at ^{the troublesome} re-entrants had so much ^{worried} ~~troubled~~

~~at~~ Judah and Newton. Turchin's brigade, of Baird's division, had suffered the **worst** in this forward movement for position.

At one time ^{this sturdy brigade} ~~it~~ was desperately engaged near to Judah's right, ^{in spite of its tenacity,} where, holding on for a time, it was finally forced back.

III. -- KENASDA AND THE GOVERNMENT.

The partial discomfiture of Judah's division, early on the 14th of May (1864), called for one of my divisions, under General Newton, as a reinforcement.

Judah's loss had been very great. Johnson's brigade alone, out of four thousand men, lost about six hundred in that conflict.

General John Newton, who has been doing grand engineering work in the vicinity of New York, -- no less than excavating and removing immense ledges of rock beneath the waters of the Hell Gate, -- and is now at the head of our Grand Corps of Engineers, is a man of diversified attainments. He has a remarkably active brain, and I know of no one better able to provide against every probable contingency.

One who was present says that General Newton's division steadily pressed the enemy, driving him back and causing him heavy losses, and that his men, counting out a few stragglers, kept their lines and behaved as old soldiers. Newton displayed here his usual tenacity, secured all the ground he could gain by a steady advance, and returned fire for fire until the fierce artillery and rifle fusillade diminished to a listless skirmish.

If we look along Palmer's corps to the right of Newton, we find Garlin's brigade, of E. W. Johnson's division, and Mitchell's brigade, of Jeff. G. Davis's division, doing the same thing as Newton, -- pushing the enemy's skirmishers out of the thickets, seeking cover as they advanced, and by their rapid and effective fire silencing those batteries which at reinforcements had no such position as Judah and Newton. Trenchin's brigade, of Baird's division, had suffered the worst in this forward movement for position.

At one time it was desperately engaged near to Judah's right, where, holding on for a time, it was finally forced back.

Now, passing along ^{further} toward the left over the rough ground east of Camp Creek, and amid the underbrush and scattered chestnut-trees, we find my next division in the line. General Thomas John Wood commanded it. He had two brigades deployed in one line, namely, Hazen's and Willich's. They were covered by a complete skirmish-line, every man and officer in place. He waited or advanced cautiously, so as to find Schofield's left without displacing any of Cox's division. I was ^{at that time} ~~then~~ with him as his men advanced into position. The movement was like a parade. I observed how remarkably different was the conduct of his veteran ^{soldiers} compared with that of new troops. They were not, perhaps, braver, but they were less excited, and knew just what to do. I remember when suddenly the enemy's skirmish-fire began ~~that~~ Wood's main lines immediately halted and lay down. The skirmishers quickly found the best ^{possible} cover of rocks, logs, and folds of the ground ~~possible~~, and returned the fire, but not rapidly. When General Wood was ready he made a quick advance, drove in the enemy's skirmishers, and seized their detached rifle-pits, capturing some prisoners. Every Confederate not killed, wounded, or captured ran at once within his breastworks proper, and for a short time the fire of artillery and infantry from his main lines was brisk and destructive ^{enough}, till General Wood, by planting and covering his own batteries, and by intrenching or barricading his men, was able to give ^{back} blow for blow.

General Stanley's division, as we have before seen, came up on the extreme left. It was well located, as well as could be ^{done} with the left flank in air. Stanley endeavored, by his reserve brigade, and by his artillery carefully posted ^{behind his lines} by its brave chief, Captain Simonson, to so reinforce his left as to make up for want of some natural obstacle. Though he covered the ~~main~~ railway and the ~~main~~

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natural obstacle. Though he covered the main railway and the main

main Dalton wagon- road, yet there was a long stretch of rough ground between Stanley's left and the Oostanaula. The bend of the river was so great that an entire corps ^{if thrust in} could hardly have filled the opening. Stanley had the same lively advance as ^{the} others, and was well in position before 3 P. M. of this day ^{May} (14th). The Confederate commander General Johnston, was quick to detect anything so tempting as a "flank in air", and so he directed Hood to send heavy columns against and beyond that flank.

A terrific combat ^{here} began soon after three. The front attack was hand-somely met, and the batteries well used, but Stanley finding ^{the} turning force too great for him, sent me word in haste that the enemy was turning his left. Knowing the situation exactly, I took with me Colonel Morgan, of the Fourteenth Infantry, colored troops, who was temporarily on my staff, and rode quickly to General Thomas, who was then fortunately but a few hundred yards from me. I explained to the General the exact condition of things and begged for an immediate heavy reinforcement. Thomas directed Hooker to send me a division. Hooker at once detached the veteran troops of General A. S. Williams, and Colonel Morgan, for me, guided them ^{straighter} as fast as troops could march to Stanley's flank.

The division came when most needed. Stanley's left had ^{already} been assailed front and flank and forced back. All his ^e reserves had ~~already~~ been exhausted in extending and reinforcing his lines, the batteries had been diligently worked, doing much to check and delay the enemy's progress, but still his over-lapping forces had ^{mainly} ~~already~~ begun to roll up our lines and hopelessly displace our men, when the bright flags of William's leading brigade came in sight. It was deployed at the double-quick at right angles to our general line, and instanly, with the batteries, opened a terrific, ^{resistless} fire.

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In a few minutes the hostile advance was checked, the tide was turned, and the Confederates swept back and driven within their intrenchments.

In the Fourth Corps that day we lost four hundred men. ^{After an anxious night,} General Hooker and myself were instructed to make a joint attack at daylight of the 15th. ^{of May} For a starting-point I caused my whole front to be strongly intrenched during the night.

It was found to be impracticable to so relieve Hooker's Twentieth Corps by other troops ^{as} to enable him to get Geary's and Butterfield's divisions to my position, and opposite his selected point of attack, before 10 A. M. ~~of the 15th, of May.~~ I had, however, earlier ^{than this} reported to General Hooker ^{who was} my senior in rank. I went to his headquarters ^{that} in the morning, learned from him the points of Johnston's line which he intended to assail, and had him carefully describe to me the manner in which he should form his troops, and how I could best give him support.

At last about noon everything was in readiness. Hooker's Corps was drawn up in a column of brigades, -that is, each brigade was in line, and one followed another with no great intervals between them.

My support was ^{placed} on his right and left. As usual I was to so breast the enemy along my ^{whole} front that he could not detach brigades or regiments against General Hooker; and further, as Hooker gained ground I was to follow up his movement and aid him to secure whatever he should capture. Besides, I held a reserve which was kept ready at his call in case of disaster or ^{other} extraordinary need.

The ground in our front was very rough, appearing like detached strongholds more ^{or} less covered with trees. During the night ^{to our observation} preceding ^{all} we heard our enemy's axemen at work strengthening their intrenchments and bettering their battery epaulments.

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The ground in our front was very rough, appearing like detached
straggle of hills covered with grass. During the night
preceding we heard our enemy's axemen at work strengthening their
indefensible positions and bettering their battery equipments.

I well remember Hooker's ^{characteristic} advance. As his men ascended the first height, both armies appeared to be ^{intently} observing the eager columns. Butterfield's division took the lead, that of Williams followed, and then Geary's. The noise and the excitement increased as the forces neared each other. Hooker appeared to gain ground for some time. His men advanced by rushes rather than by steady movement. Two or three sets of skirmish trenches were captured before Butterfield's leading brigade ^{had run} upon a strong lunette ^{which was} thoroughly manned with artillery (four guns) and infantry. This lunette must first be carried. Attempt after attempt was ^{by Hooker's men} made to get a footing near enough to take it by assault.

Hooker's officers and men were as eager as those of Napoleon in his first Italian campaign, who were stopped in a similar way when attempting to emerge from a defile on the eastern face of the Alps. Hooker, however, had but partial success. After desperate fighting, the enemy, behind cover, would break Hooker's men back only to try again. Finally, seeing a covered position close up, ^{a rush,} a bound was made for it. Butterfield aided by Geary, secured it. So ^{the men} near to the guns and beneath a crest were ~~they~~ that they almost paralyzed their use, that is, against our advance line, though ^{their guns did} they still ~~made~~ bloody work, using canister and shells against the brigades farther off. During this advance, which we confess was not very successful and attended with loss, the Twenty-third Corps or a good part of it, was brought over to aid Hooker at the instant he appeared ^{for a brief time} to make a break ^{through} the enemy's main line. The accounts of this battle represent as engaged in it Brigadier-General Ward, a hearty, cheerful leader of large size, who was as brave as he was good and fat. Colonel Coburn's and Col^{nel} Wood's brigades were also involved. It is said that one regiment, the Seventieth Indiana, sprang from a thicket upon the lunette, and

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as they came on, the Confederate artillerists blazed away ^{upon them} without checking the men. They entered the embrasures, they shot the gunners. In this effort Ward was badly wounded. Colonel Harrison immediately took his place. He is the present Senator from Indiana and the grandson of President Harrison. The fire from intrenchments behind the lunette became severe, being delivered in volley after volley; too severe to render it proper to remain there, so that Colonel Harrison, getting ready to make another vigorous advance, drew back his line a few yards under the cover of the lunette hill.

Here it is ^{told} ~~said~~ that a color-bearer by the name of Hess, One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Illinois, was chagrined to hear the shrill triumphant cry of the enemy. He at once turned back and unfurled his flag, swinging it in defiance. But he was instantly slain for his rashness. A correspondent says that "there were other hands to grasp the flag, and it came back only to return and wave from the very spot where its former bearer fell". In the most determined way those four guns were now defended by both sides, costing many lives, but there they stayed hereafter unused ^{by either party} till dark. Then the Confederates made a bold charge to retake them, but our men promptly and successfully repelled this charge. Finally the picks and spades were brought up, ^{by our soldiers} our defenders dug their way to ^{the guns} them, and at last these costly trophies were ^{permanently} brought into our lines.

The Confederate commander says that this was an advance battery of Hood's, ^{out} put on the morning of the 15th, of May, eighty or one hundred yards; that our men disabled the battery by a musketry fire from a ravine close by; that then they in turn attempted to take it, and were repulsed, - "so the unintrenched guns without

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of Hood's, put on the morning of the 13th of May, eighty or one
hundred yards; that our men disabled the battery by a musketry
fire from a ravine close by; that then they in turn attempted to
take it, and were repulsed,--"so the untroubled guns without

men were left between the two lines until the Southern troops abandoned the position".

We now know that Hood, in front of Hooker, had been constantly reinforced by Hardee and Polk, and that just as Hooker started his columns Hood had pushed out his attacking lines, so that the first shock was severe, each side being on the offensive. There is a report that the Confederate officers opposite to the Indiana regiments, under General Hovey, heard through prisoners that the majority of Hovey's men were new levies, and that a special column was therefore organized under the convenient cover of a deep ravine. This column struck a furious sledge-hammer blow against Hovey. The new levies fought with spirit, repelled that blow and several successive attacks which were made. Finally, Hovey led a counter-charge at double-quick and encountered a dreadful fire, but succeeded in routing the Confederate ^{obstinate} attacking column and driving it to its own cover.

^{own} My [^]corps (the Fourth) had borne its part. Artillery and musketry had been kept active ^{along} all the line, and strong demonstrations, with double skirmish-lines, were made from my centre and right.

These partial and one real assault succeeded in keeping the Confederates from leaving my front. General Willich ^{in the engagement} was ^{severely} wounded, and left us. ^{the arms} Harker and Opky^{ke}, of Newton's division, were also wounded, but remained with us on duty.

Sherman's aggregate loss in this engagement was between four and five thousand. Probably nearly two thousand were so slightly injured that they were on duty again within a month.

By referring again to the comments of General Johnston, the Confederate commander, we see that the cause of his retreat is not by him ascribed to the persistent fighting which ^I have undertaken to portray. He says, "It was because two bridges and a large

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By referring again to the comments of General Johnston, the Con-
federate commander, we see that the cause of his retreat is not
by him ascribed to the persistent fighting which have undertaken
to portray. He says, "It was because two bridges and a large

body of Federal troops were *discovered* - the afternoon of the 14th, at Lay's Ferry, some miles below, strongly threatening our communications by the indication of another flanking operation, - covered by the river as the first had been by the ridge".

Under instructions from General Sherman, McPherson had ^{early} sent a division of the Sixteenth Corps, commanded by the one-armed Sweeny, to Lay's Ferry. He was to make a lodgment on the other bank of the Oostanaula and protect the engineer officer, Captain Reese, while he laid his pontoon bridge. General Sweeny found some force there, which he dislodged and drove off, but getting a report, which then seemed to him probable, that the Confederates were crossing above and cutting him off from the main army, he withdrew, and retired at least a mile and a half from the river; but the

next day, the 15th, he made another attempt to bridge the Oostanau-
la, which was successful. ^{But now} Sweeny had, after crossing, a serious engagement with a division which the Confederate commander had detached against him. In this Sweeny lost two hundred and fifty killed and wounded. Nevertheless he established his bridge-head on the left bank of the Oostanaula, drove off the opposing force, and opened the way for our cavalry to operate upon Johnston's rear. It seems that the Confederate commander had first protected that eastern bank of the river by General Martin's cavalry.

Sweeny's first operations had displaced a part of that ^{cavalry} force. On hearing of it, Confederate Walker's division of infantry was hurried to Calhoun, ^{a haullet} nearly opposite Sweeny's crossing. ^{Walker} He reported everything clear, and concluded that Martin's alarm had no good foundation.

It is easy from this to see how hard it would have been for Johnston's army to escape had Sherman's primary instructions been promptly and energetically carried into execution ^{of May} early on the 14th;

body of Federal troops were withdrawn the afternoon of the 14th, at Jay's Ferry, some miles below, strongly threatening our communications by the indication of another flanking operation, covered by the river as the first had been by the ridge, under instructions from General Sherman, Johnston had sent a division of the Sixteenth Corps, commanded by the energetic Sweeny to Jay's Ferry. He was to make a lodgment on the other bank of the Gatunilla and protect the engineer officer, Captain Keese, while he laid his pontoon bridge. General Sweeny found some force there, which he dislodged and drove off, but getting a report which then seemed to him probable, that the Confederates were crossing above and cutting him off from the main army, he withdrew and retired at least a mile and a half from the river; but the next day, the 15th, he made another attempt to bridge the Gatunilla, which was successful. Sweeny had, after crossing, a serious engagement with a division which the Confederate commander had detached against him: in this Sweeny lost two hundred and fifty killed and wounded. Nevertheless he established his bridge-head on the left bank of the Gatunilla, drove off the opposing force, and opened the way for our cavalry to operate upon Johnston's rear. It seems that the Confederate commander had first projected that a crossing of the river by General Martin's cavalry. Sweeny's first operation had displaced a part of that force. On hearing of it, Confederate Walker's division of infantry was hurried to Gatunilla, nearly opposite Sweeny's crossing. His report of everything clear, and concluded that Martin's alarm had no good foundation. It is easy from this to see how hard it would have been for Johnston's army to escape had Sherman's primary instructions been promptly and energetically carried into execution early on the 14th.

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and it is worth observing that so small a thing as a false rumor was as effective there at Resaca in the salvation of Johnston's forces as it was in the times of old in the destruction of the hosts of the Syrians.

We were up bright and early on the morning of the 16th.

The sunlight gave a strange appearance to the smoke or fog among the tree-tops. During our heavy sleep between midnight and dawn a change had been wrought. Not a cannon, not a rifle, not a carbine ^{were there} to give defiant shots along our front. The tireless Newton was the first to move. His skirmishers soon bounded over the parapets of Hood to find the enemy *gone*.

Speaking of this battle a Confederate writer gives a most graphic account. He names Hindman, Stephenson, and Stewart, division commanders, and he speaks of Clayton, Baker, Stovall, Gibson, Brown, Pettus, Reynolds, and others, brigade commanders. He brings them into action, making up a handsome repulse of three lines of battle closely massed. He thinks that these organized charges amounted to at least six in number. Here is the graphic account of the last charge: "On came the enemy, cheering loudly, and confident that their superior numbers would insure them success. They approached to within fifty yards of the line, firing rapidly on our men; a sheet of fire, one deafening roar, which sounded like the eruption of a volcano, was the answer, and the dead and wounded lie piled up before our works. . . This was the severest charge of the day. The Yankees advanced well and with spirit, but were forced to succumb to the fierce fire of our troops.

To describe the scene would be almost an impossibility, for it beggars description. The minié balls of the Yankees poured over our line in an unceasing stream, and in such numbers that the air seemed black with them. The sharp and musical whiz they emit was

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The sunlight gave a strange appearance to the smoke or fog among
the troops. During our heavy sleep between midnight and dawn
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Speaking of this battle a Confederate writer gives a most graphic
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no longer heard; it was an angry and discordant imitation of a peal of thunder rolling along the clouds, while the booming of the artillery and the bursting of the shells, as they came flying over our lines, formed a fire unequalled, perhaps, since nations first made war upon each other. But one thing saved us from a fearful loss of life, and it was that the Yankees fired entirely too high".

Our fighting at Resaca was indeed severe, and now we learn that the whole of it, except the small combat at Lay's Ferry, was very little effective towards the result which our commander had in view. It is, as we look at it, only one of the thousand demonstrations of the energy and fearlessness of the thousands of soldiers who were opposed to each other.

So clearly showed to observing & thoughtful soldiers how strong were entrenched lines and how next to impossible it was to ~~carry~~ force a way through them when completely manned by troops of the same race ^{that were alike} armed alike. In sorrow we were taught this lesson at Fredericksburg as was the corps of Longstreet subsequently at Knoxville.

General F. W. Palfrey, the author of one of Scribner's Series, remarks concerning Fredericksburg as follows: "Into how much detail must we go in telling the story of this attempt to carry wooded slopes and successive crests, this advance against a strong force of admirable troops, covered by breastworks and rifle-pits, with guns protected by earthworks, disposed in lines which gave both front and enfilading fires on their assailants as they moved up the gradual slope which swelled from the town to the hostile lines?" He further says, "We read with a certain equanimity of such events as the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo or Badajos,

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or the assaults on the Redan and Malakoff, both because we feel that in these cases necessity determined the work to be attempted, and because we feel that the leaders of the assailants exerted their utmost powers to increase to the utmost their chances of success. But at Fredericksburg we see a gallant army engaged in an undertaking at once unnecessary and hopeless, and sent to destruction with no plan and no preparation!

These are severe words and they do not apply to Resaca, for the chances of success did appear, in this case to the leaders, in favor of an assault, but certainly the results of the direct fighting were very costly and did not afford any fruitage commensurate with the losses sustained.

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And surely this battle was another lesson against attacking entrenched positions, when fully manned and properly defended.

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These are severe words and they do not apply to Beauregard, for the
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favor of an assault, but certainly the results of the direct
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