

A statement of facts concerning the surrender
of the Third Regiment of Minnesota
Volunteers at Murfreesboro, Tenn., July 13th, 1862.

The undersigned officers of the regiment being witnesses of the events of that day so memorable and so fearful, make the following statement of facts to correct the contradictory reports which have already been circulated, and to place before the public the truth concerning matters that involve the honor of our State and of every man in the regiment.

The enemy, as far as we can learn from all the witnesses of their movements, from the muster rolls and from the statements of prisoners, had a force of two thousand five hundred cavalry; two regiments were from Georgia, one from Texas, and then there were shagging parties from Alabama, Tennessee and Kentucky.

They had passed within our lines early in the morning, their scouts going through fields and coming up in the rear of our pickets surprised and cut them off before they could give the alarm. The attack was made on the camps of the Seventh Pennsylvania Cavalry and Ninth Regiment of Michigan volunteers about 4 o'clock A. M. Our camp was on the Murfree Farm, a little to the right of the Nashville turnpike near Stone river. Hewitt's First Kentucky Battery was encamped near us, and at the first alarm all of the men began to prepare for action with the greatest alacrity. Not more than ten minutes elapsed before the regiment was in line of battle before the camp. The preparation to meet the enemy was thorough, and the men perfectly self possessed. The regiment marched along the road towards Mur-

freesboro to the corner of the fence just beyond the old mansion and drew up in line of battle, the left wing resting in an old peach orchard, and the right near the road. This was about 300 yards from the camp and was a tolerably favorable position as the rear was completely protected and the left and right supported by the guns of the battery. The two guns on our left wing were immediately brought into action, the enemy appearing in the distance and threatening an attack. In a short time the regiment was ordered to advance across the open field in front to a point within 150 yards of a heavy piece of timber. A party of the enemy 250 strong made an attack on our camps, which had been left without any adequate guard. This force came across the fields from the direction of the Lebanon turnpike and was not observed until within a short distance of the camp. Hewitt's battery threw shells at them but did not get the range effectively and the enemy plundered and burned our camps, after a most heroic resistance on the part of the few brave men that were left. Private V. Woodman, Co. "C", and Corporal H. Green, Co. "I" were killed and ten or twelve men wounded in this fight, while the enemy lost fifteen men. Simultaneously with the attack on our camp was the first charge upon our line. A force of about 500 of the enemy appeared in our front, but so vigorously were they met by the battery and our skirmishers that only one company reached our lines, and only four passed between the left wing of the regiment and the battery, and all of these were killed, wounded or taken prisoners. This charge was made about 6 o'clock. The wounded and the dead were placed under an oak tree but a short distance from our right wing. When the attack was made the

surgeons and ambulances were ordered by Col. Lester, in direct range of the enemy's fire, and balls fell thick around those whose business it was to be there. After the sounds of the battle and the yells of the plunderers died away from the camp, and the enemy were repulsed in front, there was a considerable interval without much excitement, during which the cars from Nashville arrived loaded with commissary stores. They passed over the bridge and stopped in a place accessible and protected. The arrival of the cars was regarded as most fortunate for our provisions in camp were destroyed and the men had eaten nothing that morning. The river and good springs of water were near, and after being solicited the Col. permitted the men to get some crackers and meat, and they cheerfully chatted while waiting for the enemy and eating their dinner. Never did men stand more calmly in the face of an attacking party, maintaining the utmost coolness, glad of an opportunity to vindicate their country's flag. The enemy appeared in force three times and three times retired before the deadly aim of our skirmishers and the fire of our battery. Skirmishing and cannonading continued from 5 o'clock A. M. until 1 o'clock P. M., but there was no charge upon our general line, and many of our men on the right wing never fired a gun. Up to 1 o'clock we had occupied the same unfavorable and exposed position and although many of the officers wondered that we did not make any attempt to advance, retreat, or place ourselves in a position to resist an attack of cavalry, none questioned the wisdom and courage of our almost idolized leader Col. Lester. With a whole train loaded with provisions before us

we failed to supply ourselves against any future contingency, but, at the time mentioned, the sick and wounded were ordered to the rear of Murfree's house, and the regiment marched in splendid order to a new and impregnable position in front of the house. There the men were drawn up in line of battle, protected on the right by a fence and the precipitous banks of Stone river, on the left by several garden fences and a thick grove, in front by a fence and a grove, from which an impossible abatis could have been made in an hour. In the rear was the mansion, negro quarters and outhouses, making a complete defence. The men were perfectly confident of victory. They believed that the enemy had two thousand men and knew they could whip them. Thus stood matters; the cars had slowly backed down the road and escaped, all of our remaining ammunition was brought to a convenient place and the men filled their cartridge boxes and pockets until they had from fifty to one hundred rounds a piece. The brave lads were as cheerful while filling their pockets with cartridges as they would have been filling them with doughnuts at a pic nic. The battery was abundantly supplied with ammunition. We are enabled to state facts proven by the sergeants of the battery. Gun #3, had fired during the day 95 rounds and had 105 left. #4 had fired 90 times and had 105 cartridges. #5 had fired 87 times and had 110 cartridges. #6, a parrott gun, had fired 173 shots and had 27. The officers and men declare that they had abundance of means for fighting all day. Our skirmishers had been firing frequently during the day; many of them fired 20 or more shots, but more than half of the men had not the chance to fire a single shot. About

half past one o'clock a flag of truce appeared over the brow of the hill, on which we had stood during the day. It was a cause of wonder to nearly all, who had never beheld one before, and much curiosity was manifested, until the cause was known to be a demand for a surrender. Then murmurs of indignation were heard among the men. Capt Hewitt called the men of his battery together and every man voted not to surrender, but to die on their guns rather. Our own men, according to the unanimous testimony of all the officers, were not only opposed to surrendering, but indignant that the rebels should make such a demand and their Col. entertain it. Col. Lester, after a parley with the enemy, returned and hastily called the officers together, and made to them a most discouraging representation of the force of the enemy, of our own destitution, of the imminent danger of being cut to pieces, of the awful responsibility of the Captains in permitting the men to be slaughtered, of the fact that the Michigan Ninth had already surrendered. Col. Lester's manner was hurried, and his words and actions thoroughly dispiriting. He seemed to fear that the enemy would charge on us before the decision would be made, and when the men in command voted not to surrender he plead with them, got them to look over the ground again, ordered a flag of truce to be borne to the enemy to keep them from attacking us, and hastily put the vote again in the absence of three company commanders.

We had made no attempt to make a junction with the Michigan Ninth, to procure provisions, to entrench ourselves, or in any way to provide for the urgent necessities of our position. The final vote stood, six for surrendering and three against.

Col. Lester seemed to think of nothing but his own safety, and the preservation of the lives of his soldiers. That he and his command was there to defend the place and preserve the honor of the government seemed to have been forgotten. All day he had appeared abstracted and indifferent. When different officers begged him to permit them to defend our camp from the marauders he refused. When a messenger went to the Michigan Ninth and brought back a written request that he should make a junction with them he declined going, because, he said, he thought it his duty to protect the train of cars, which he afterwards abandoned to its fate, totally neglecting to take from the cars a supply for his own men, though urged to do so, and afterwards pleading his want of supplies as a reason for surrendering. Thus spending the day idly almost, and without adopting any means of defense, he earnestly plead for a surrender at the first appearance of a flag of truce.

That the disheartened and betrayed men should have turned their reverence to loathing is not surprising. The splendid guns of the battery, the fine rifles of the well trained and brave men, the honor of the State of Minnesota, and of the United States, the noble men who would have followed Col. Lester to certain victory, were surrendered to our enemies without a struggle. The enemy could not have mustered more than two thousand men, and that number could not have taken our guns, nor obliged us to surrender, if our commander had been competent and brave. The act done and many of the men wept with rage and grief, and the idol of the regiment fell to infinite depths.

We beg for the men, for ourselves, that we may have another trial if possible, and with no malice, but with earnest grief, record these facts.



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