

Story of a Regiment's first fight.

Do you mind comrades the thirty years to night,
Our Regiment received its first baptism in fight;
We had seen some service in camp, and on march;
And knew what it was to be well parched;
In the dust, of the Old Dominion!
We had marched mit Siegle o'er the field of Bull Run;
Where the dead lay in heaps to bleach in the sun;
We had marched to Fredricksburg, in mud to our knees;
While we took in the chickens; we found at Dumfries;
We were ordered to be there; by a certain day;
But the short legged outehmen, got stuck mit the clay;
And with Siegle we got there, one day too late;
Which likely saved us, from a much worse fate;
For we reached the field, late one night;
And not in time, to take part in the fight;
But we covered the retreat, of Burnside's men;
Out of that Terrible hall; called the Slaughter Pen.
We were ordered to Stafford; not liking it much;
But we shouldered our axes, and beat the Dutch;
In building some fine winter quarters.
Our quarters were built in Surpurb Stile;
And we taunted our neighbors, the Dutch meanwhile;
Because their quarters resembled a sty;
We soon learned better; you remember why;
It seemed Burnside had planned a visit to Genl. Lee's;
And ordered Siegle, to send men, to cut trees;

So ~~was~~ Siegel, in looking over his corps,
Spied out the Regiment, who, if nothing more,
Knew how to handle, their axes, a lot!
And he said, Colonel, you take dot Regiment and trot!
Right Over to the River; then you Chop!
And make a good road, thro' the Timber,
So in midwinter we marched Over the frozen ground;
Heartily wishing the Dutchman, was in the Government Pound,
For it snowed that right as we bivouaced in the Timber,
And we were pretty tired; and not very limber;
But with hard-tack, and Coffee, and a sleep in the Snow!
We awoke, in the morning better, roused, I know!
And wondering much, if the Order, was legal!
And if this was the way, we fight mit Siegel!
Then we were soon at work, cutting the Timber,
And making a Road, down to the River,
A week of hard chopping, and our task was done!
But what it was for we had no Idea under the Sun;
And we had no clue that the army, was out!
Till one dismal morning we were Ordered about,
And were retracing Our Steps, by the same Rout
By which we came.
After marching to the rear, a few miles that day;
We found the Roads crowded with troops, in Our way;
We were ordered to halt and let them pass!
We complied, not forgetting, to give them the Pass!
We had learned, while fighting, mit Siegel!

The roads were smooth frozen, hard, and strong;
And the Trundle of Artillery Wagons, was loud and long;
And our Rebel foes must have had ample warning;
To lookout for Burnside's Army, before morning;
And they did as you will surely recall;
And it made our Army, feel rather small;
Well, we had to unslung knapsacks, and wait,
The coming of the huge, Pontoon freight;
We were to guard to the river, over Pine bridge,
And then to help build, the Pontoon ridge,
Over which our Army was to rush, en mass;
And gobble the Johnny's, ever so fast;
All day, it portended a down-pour of rain;
And we were waiting, for the Pontoon Train;
By 3 P.M. we were drenched, in a driving Rain;
Till it fairly poured, and the moving Train,
Began to cut thro' the hard frozen Roads,
And the Artillery wagons with their heavy loads;
Had crushed into mud, the crest of the roads;
And the Mules ^{were} floundering knee-deep in mud,
And the Pontoon Train was down to the hub;
The teamsters were cursing, and lashing the mules;
Not minding at all, the Government Rules;
We were soaked clear thro' with the pouring Rain;
While stuck hard, and fast, was the Pontoon Train,
Then Bayonets, were fixed, and the guns stuck down;
While we grouped about on the rain-soaked ground,

There we stood in the storm, and the night,
But never a fire, were allowed to light.
Then some one struck up the Old familiar Song,
Which was responded to, loud and long,
"So let the Pontoons wag as they will"
"Well be gay, and happy still!"

Certain it is we did the best we could:

Under the circumstance, which were not very good,
Some laid down 'tho' the ground was a lake
Others munched, hard tacks, to keep them awake!
The rain had ceased, and the morning light.

Showed Burnside's Army, in a comical plight,
The Rebels were having a great lot of fun;

Our Army whiped without their firing a gun,
On the other side of the river, they were out in line;
And it was evident, they were feeling fine,
For they guffawed, and ~~chattered~~ chattered their cud
And they yelled across, Burnside stuck in the mud,
Well we marched back over the muddy roads;

And to make it still worse, that night it snowed;
And as we lay on the ground the morning light,
Showed one unbroken shroud of white.

Then the snow mounds, began to swell;
And men jumped up to swear like hell,
Others to laugh, and have a snow ball fight,
And it surely was, a most comical sight.

In winter quarters the Army was settled once more
and Burnside resigned and took Command of a Corps,
Then fighting Joe Hooker was the chosen one,
and he gave out; there would be something done!
Then came the Order to march out the towards
and we changed Corps Commanders from Sigle to Howard,
By April the Army was ready to do something grand!
and Lincoln came out, to review the Command,
and tho' we loved him, we had to laugh!

at his comical figure when mounted, & leading his Staff;
as he rode at a canter, by the side of General Joe;
who was a superb rider as you will know;

But when in our turn we marched in Review,
and looked in his face so loyal and true;

It seemed to inspire us with a deeper devotion,
to defend the Old flag, for One Country, One Nation;
with hope in our breasts from this Inspiration;
we were ready to battle all the Rebs in the Nation;
then we got ready for another advance;

and braced what we'd do, if we had a chance;
then our Division was ordered to Kelleys Ford,
in advance of the rest of our Army hoard,
we did picket duty on the Rapahannock River;

But had to keep our main body under cover,
so as not to attract attention Texas said;
Lest the Rebels come over and catch us abed!

Well one night the Pontoons were sent down and hid from sight
Next morning, we were ordered to draw 50 rounds & be ready to fight
Then just at dusk we marched quietly down to the ford!
And volunteers were called for the Pontoons to Board!
Then the Boats were shoved quickly across the tide;
a few shots were fired; but the balls went wide;

For no one was hurt; and we scrambled up the Banks
and in a very few minutes, the shore was lined with Yanks!
Our Regiment quickly formed in line of battle, ready!

And the Colonel's voice rang out, clear and steady!
Fix bayonets, forward; guide Centre! double quick Charge!
Then into the darkness, we charged with a will,
and soon brought up against Kelley's old mill!
Here the pickets were thrown out, for the night,
and there we lay on our arms till light,
at dawn, tho' there was a heavy mist

A tole was taken which included, all the millers grist;
likewise, chickens, turkeys, and Pigs; & eggs newly laid!
were all taken in, by the requisition made,

Then the Bugle sounded; and we marched away;
for we were to cross the Rappid-Cann that day;
we reached Germainia ford, at 3 P.M. that day,
and here the Artillery, and Trains, blocked our way;
for the River was a Rappid-Cann, indeed;
and many a poor mule, found out his need,
of longer legs; and more weight in Pounds,
In which case, he would not have been drowned.

After a long and tiresome delay
we crossed on a foot bridge, and were again on our way;
Darkness soon settled over our weary road;

And our knapsacks seemed a double load,
As foot sore, and weary, we marched on in the dust,
And all because of the terrible 'must',
Which every soldier knows full well;
For it would not do, for him to Tice;

The General twas time to halt;
What time of night we finally came to a stop;
With many so tired they were ready to drop;

I do not now just remember to recall;
Twas on the plank road, where Jackson, next day opened ^{the} Ball,
In a very few minutes, after the guns were stacked;
Knapsacks unslung, and thrown just back;

Our boys were sleeping in blissful repose;
Nor dreamed of what the morrow might bring from their foes,
The Reveille was sounded at four in the morning;
And we were soon at work with a wonderful longing,
For our coffee, Bacon and good hard Yack.

Of which each had plenty in his haversack;

But just when our coffee was nearly done;
Our Rebel foes, thought to have some fun;
Whizz! Whizz! Bang! Bang! Just over our heads;
But twas only some Rebel shell they said;
But they made in our camp a lively commotion;
In which every soldier, lost, of his coffee, a portion!

A few more shells were thrown just to let us see;
How polite, the Rebel General intended to be;
By giving us a Salute; for our breakfast;
Well our breakfast was swallowed in rather quick time,
And we were soon ready to fall in to line;
But some way, our General did not seem in a hurry;
And we concluded not to get in a flurry
So we looked about, to see the Lay of the Land,
And to speculate what to do, in case we lacked sand,
To stand up, and fight.

We were on the Fredericksburg Plank Road

Two miles south west of the Chancellor Abroad
And near Doudats Tavern, head quarters of our Corps;
Hookers head quarters were two miles north east
While a good mile of timber at least,
Between Howard's Corps and the rest of our Army;
Some time in the morning we were moved by Division;
And our Regiment was assigned its proper position:
1 Division on the right facing south west and
2 Division Ours, on left facing south east ^{the wilderness}
3 Division in Centre facing south east
Our Corps as I remember the formation made,
Did not seem to be in good order to repel a raid,
Regiments on angles with each other, hence;
We were as crooked as an old rail fence,
with gaps at every corner;

But we were altogether to Raw!

To be finding fault, or picking a flaw!

With General Howard's plan of Battle;

So we waited to see how the Guns would Rattle; ~~the~~
About 9 a.m. Gen. Hooker & Staff came riding our way,
And pointed out to Howard the way matters lay!

Had he known Gen. Howard, as well as he did later,
There would have been a change of Commanders in station;
Nast any good man in his place might have done,
Some one who would not have run!

Crying like a baby, after the flying Dutchman!

What Plans were brewing we were not supposed to know!

But be ready to shoot, and to fire Low!

But any man, without eaven Rank!

Could see thro' the timber the movement towards our flank!
Which to our minds, boded no good!

For our Scouts came in from the thick dark wood
And reported thousands of Rebels massing there!

But Gen. Howard said 'twas only a secret!

Thus the day wore on yet nothing was done!

To meet the Stroke that was sure to come!

But all the Brass Bands in our Corps

were playing air's Rory-O'more!

Or Yankee doodle-doodle, do, Yankee doodle Dandy;

We'll whip the Johnny Rebs, just so neat & handy!

As the day wore on with its music and fun!

We got nervous; and watched the waning Sun!

Occasionally off to left we heard a random gun
which broke the sullen silence of our foe;
But what it meant we could not know!
It must have been near five P.M.
When two wild deer, rushed thru the ranks of the men,
of Shurtz and Demins' Divisions!
The boys chased the deer and began to yell,
Not knowing that behind them ^{was} a regular Hell!
with Genl Stonewall Jackson as leader!
A few minits later and there were Picket Shots,
which brought our Regiment into line in a jolt,
Then came a long deafning roar,
as though the rifles of a whole Rebel Corps
were all let loose at once!
The next thing we saw on that ill-fated spot,
was the flying Dutchmen yelling mine got,
The whole Rebel Army, has got in our Rear;
And if Onley, Genl Long Single was here;
For we fight, mit Sigel's and runs mit Howard!
And gives not a damn if you call us a Coward,
Soon the 1st & 3rd divisions swept over us, in a flying mass,
And we were to meet the Rebels at last!
Our Regiment was then about 700 strong;
And we had been bragging all along;
What we would do,
I'll explain something of our condition;
Barlow's, the best Brigade, in our Division!

Had gone with Genl Sickles, on a scout;
About one hour or more before the Rout,
And left us with out any support,
Now very much quicker than I can tell!
The Rebels came on with that terrible yell!
Our Soldiers learned to know so well;
For it always meant the death yell!
To many a brave and loyal heart.
But on they came, like a gray line of mist,
Out of which, the leaden bullets hissed;
Their Biers, and Bars; floating mid the smoke;
Which plainer than their Rifles spoke;
Just who; and what they were;
But our Regiment stood, a loyal line;
With our Banner unfurled to the breeze so fine;
A moment more and our Colonel broke the spell,
'That's the Rebels boys; give them Hell!
Then a steady roar from our Rifles Pealed,
And the brown gray line before us reeled;
And staggered; as if from a mighty blow;
Struck ^{by} some unlooked for hidden foe;
But on they ^{came} with a terrible must;
But surely their line was biting the dust,
And the brown gray line was getting thin;
For the way we were firing was no sin!
For our blood was up; and our guns were hot;
How long this lasted, I tell you not.

How none can measure the time in a fight!
With any hope of getting it right,
While the gray line in our front went down;
But the flanks of the Rebel Corps, swept round;
And the 'irs! we knew, there was into us poured,
A rear flank fire, by the rebel hoard,
And our boys were falling thick and fast,
But the Old Flag waived mid the deadly blast,
Every other Regiment from the field had fled;
Followed by Howard, crying, they said;
But the Hard-Luck Regiment was there to stay;
So long as there was any hope of the day;
But our Colonel was wounded, our Adjutant dead;
The Lt. Colonel ordered, 'fall back; for the aid;
We can do nothing more than to stop their lead;
And all be gobbled;
I never like to think of our retreat that hour;
For we were raked with a regular shower;
Of Lead and hail; and bursting shell;
And we had to go pretty much pell-mell;
To reach the protecting timber;
and men were dropping on enemy side.
And to have said I wasn't scared; I must have lied;
For we were raked from flank, and rear;
And it made one feel some what queer;
At last we reached the 12th Corps' line;
And found them standing firm, and fine;
We reformed our line, rounded our colors there;

And gave three Cheers to Our Sargent who dare;
To hold, and wave them, in Stone walls face;
As we shook him in his head long, chase;
Of the first, and Third Divisions.

For we held for an hour, Joe Hooker said,
In that deadly storm of Rebel Lead,
The whole of Jackson's Corps.
But the price we paid, was a terrible Cost;
Of more than half, Our number in last;
For Our Sargent had faced, with a firm tread;
Back and forth in that storm of Lead;
Which riddled the Colors with their sither strands,
and splintered the Standard; between his hands,
All honor now to that Sargent so brave;
He carried that banner, right on to his grave;
He is sleeping now with his comrades so brave;
For his blood stained the banner he loved & so wain;
At Gettysburg battle, he fell in his might;
neath the folds of Old glory; he fought his last fight;
What was left of Our Regiment, now closed up in line;
and taking position were ready a ^{2^d} time;
For whatever might come,
Our right rested on the plank road;
Very near to the Chancellorsville abode;
In front of our line, and reaching half a mile;
were the Batteries, as thick as they could pile,
and shotted heavy, with Canister, and Grape;

All ready to knock the Rebels out of shape,
When ever they came on again,
It had been dark some little time;
But we could hear the Rebels getting in line;
A moment more, and their "hi," "hi," "hi!"
was the signal, for our Batteries to let fly;
Right into their faces our Batteries pour
The missiles of death, which thro' their ranks tore,
While in the woods beyond, our shot and shell,
rang out to them; the terrible rill,
of death.

Three times that night, with courage and might,
Those Rebels charged right up to the light;
Of our guns, which shone in their faces;
And as some went down; Others stepped in to their places;
With a courage, worthy of a better cause;
Than trying to rend, our flag; and laws;
At length the fighting ceased, and all was hushed,
Save the groans of the wounded; all mangled & crushed;
As the Blue and the Gray; together had rushed,
and looked in death; they lay in their gore;
and were sleeping, the sleep; that wakes no more;
Thus ended the battle of the second of May,
But of our brave Boys, what shall I say,
Dead, wounded, and dying; they were scattered about;
and largely the result of the criminal rout;
at Howard's Corp; (over)

~~Among those we missed that~~
and all for the lack of a man in Command;
who who would have seen that his Corps had a chance to stand

Among Our Boys, we missed that right,
was one from Co. H who fell in the fight;
A bullet had pierced him thru the breast,
as he stood in line, and doing his best;
His rifle was smoking, the muzzle was hot,
His friends saw him fall right where he was shot,
As the Regiment fell back, he was carried part way,
By whom he was never able to say.

But I saw him propped against a tree
and more dead than alive, he seemed to be;
For the blood was oozing from his breast and back;
The cruel wound of the bullet track;
It seemed to me, he must surely die;
and none were there to help me to try;
to carry him off the field,

There was but a moment for me to stay by,
For the Rebels then were very nigh;
His bunk mate wrote home, that he was dead;
But some way he beat that Rebel lead;

and turned up him self instead;
and he is here this night to tell,
how he lived to crawl out of that terrible hell;
for we raked those woods with shot and shell.

and how he escaped his wounds.