

FROM THE 2nd NY CAVALRY

The Battle of Rude's Hill—The Onondaga Boys in the Thickest of the Fight—The Casualties

Correspondence with the Syracuse Journal

CAMP NEAR WINCHESTER, HEADQUARTERS

2nd NY Cavalry, Nov. 25, 1864

Dear Journal:

Again I chronicle a short chapter of our experience. In 2 weeks we have been in 2 fights, on a 3-days' march, and exposed to danger and death. We are fast becoming veterans.

You have received a note of our fight and losses on Cedar Creek, November 12th. On Tuesday, November 22nd, we were in an engagement of more importance, a half-mile south of Mount Jackson. Monday night, in rain and mud, darkness and cold we encamped near Woodstock. By dawn next morning the two divisions of cavalry were marching in quest of the enemy. The long column went streaming on in the cold air through this desolated valley, which in the warm anticipation of our Northern "boys" was presumed to belong to a "Sunny South," but snow covered the mountains, iced the water, and the solid, frozen pike echoed to the measured tread of the horses. By noon the enemy was found posted in a strong position, with superior numbers, and with the advantage of infantry, of which we had none. With shot and shell the fight began. Our regiment, distinguished for hard, brave work, fought on our right, which the enemy endeavored to

turn. Our Onondaga boys were thus in the thickest of the fight. The balls cut tree twigs countless over their heads; the woods swarmed with rebels, and it was very soon evident that our cavalry stood no chance of success. The regiments were ordered to fall back over the creek into the village. Our regiment covered the retreat, making several gallant charges into the very storm of bullets and putting the enemy to flight. The Divisions marched back to Woodstock to their camp of the previous night, the rebels not daring to pursue. Their cavalry has been whipped so often by ours, that they dare not engage us, except with infantry for their support.

On Wednesday the 23rd, the march was resumed to this camp, which "the boys," with a little irony, called "going home." But we are not all here. There is Capt. Remington of Co. H, in hospital at Winchester with a bullet-graze around the back of his head. And there is his Company clerk, Wm. Abbey, shot in the bowels, and a prisoner. Charles Brooks, (private,) of Co. G, is severely wounded; likewise, of Co. F, Sergeant James S. Murphy, in the leg slightly, John C. Losey, in the hip severely, and Wm. Burns had a finger shot off. The regiment lost about 20. Many horses were disabled or killed. This continual thinning of our ranks by sickness and death is very saddening. We have just heard of the deaths of Henry J. Hammond and Fred. Ransier, at Camp Stoneman; and our sick are in wayside hospitals from there to Winchester.

But our cause of national unity and human freedom is worth all this cost of anguish and suffering. It is the old law of sacrifice—God requires the best: He, Himself, gave the best, His Son, our Savior. This nation is thus honored to suffer for all nations, and to transmit those principles of civil government which are to bless the ages to come. Nor man nor nation can safely attempt to live only for themselves. The race is one, and in the eyes of divine law, is of one color, whatever men may think, or however fume or fret; and saddest of all there must needs be so much blood shed both North and South to wash the black man white, and cement our dissevered nationality. Human law must at length agree with divine, so the nation has just decided in its own case; and for this we are,

Yours, in Thanksgiving, William J. Erdman, Chaplain