

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

FOURTH ANNUAL REUNION

OF THE SOCIETY OF THE

TWELFTH REGIMENT NEW JERSEY VOLUNTEERS

HELD AT WOODBURY, FEBRUARY 22, 1878.

The fourth annual reunion of the Society of the Twelfth Regiment New Jersey Volunteers was held at the Court House, Woodbury, N. J., on the above date. The day was exceedingly disagreeable,—a cold rain falling,—which doubtless prevented a number of the comrades living in the surrounding country from attending.

At 11.00 a.m. President George C. Sithens called the society to order, and prayer was offered by Comrade Meley.

Minutes of the third annual reunion were read and approved.

The Treasurer being absent, Capt. Brown was nominated and elected Treasurer *pro tem*.

The Secretary read communications from Major-General Carroll, U. S. A., Colonel Thompson, Captain Mattison, Lieutenant Phipps, and Sergeant Burroughs, regretting their inability to be present.

The members of the Executive Committee having failed in their efforts to secure an orator for the day, short and pithy addresses appropriate to the occasion were made by Captain Brooks, Lieutenant Griscom, Captain Brown, and others.

The following committee was appointed on nomination of officers for the ensuing year: Colonel Stratton, Sergeant Stanley, Sergeant Borton, Captain Acton, and Comrade Carey.

Colonel E. L. Stratton read the following extract from a letter written by Lieutenant James S. Stratton (killed at Reams' Station), describing the feelings

and actions of the soldiers incident to the proposed charge at Mine Run, in November, 1863:

CAMP NEAR BRANDY STATION, EVE'G December 4, 1863.

MY DEAR FATHER,—It is with sincere pleasure that I seat myself to write you a few lines. I should have written you sooner, but the two days that have elapsed since we returned to our old camp have been spent in the erection of comfortable stockades, all hoping that it is to be our privilege to enjoy them during the present winter.

Perhaps a word or two respecting our march and manœuvres, our advance and retreat, will not be uninteresting to you.

On Thursday morning, the 26th ult., the Army of the Potomac was in motion, and at noon the Second Corps had reached Germania Ford and at once made preparations for crossing. To our great delight the enemy had abandoned his long line of rifle-pits and his very formidable defensive works. But little delay occurred after gaining the south bank of the Rapidan, and having followed our advancing cavalry a distance of four miles, we were halted, and permitted to spend the night in line of battle. Daylight came peeping forth to find the Second Corps again in motion, and as the pickets of the enemy fell back unresistingly before our cavalry we continued still to go forward. At noon we were double-quickened into line of battle at Robertson's Tavern, or Locust Grove, where the enemy made a strong effort at resistance throughout the remainder of the day. Although not during that day engaged with the foe, yet the hostile bullets and shell whistled over and around us, and the expectation of every one was that the Twelfth would soon be called upon to strike as she did at Chancellorsville, at Gettysburg, and at Bristow.

Our brigade of our division skirmished the entire afternoon and part of the night with the enemy, and on Saturday morning, spread out in line of battle, we advanced upon the slowly receding line of rebels. Through dense pine thickets, and over ravines small and great we pursued, but soon found that they had selected a choice and most favorable position, and there, only one mile in our front, in plain view, they stood ranged in two lines, daring us to come on. In that position the entire day was passed, both sides shelling, and the First Delaware, of our brigade, skirmishing until nightfall. At daylight on Sunday morning we were relieved by the Fifth Corps and ordered to the left, which position we reached about four o'clock in the afternoon, forming line of battle under a heavy shelling from the enemy, and afterwards spending the night in the erection of breastworks.

Before daylight on Monday our corps commenced silently to form in proximity to the position of the enemy, and shortly afterwards we all comprehended that a monster task was before us. First we noticed a grouping together and a whispering among the field and staff of the several brigades, and shortly we were informed of what had been resolved upon, which was nothing else than one grand, simultaneous charge of the entire Union line of thirty thousand upon the frowning and apparently impregnable works of the enemy. The part assigned to the Second Corps was, in all probability, the most difficult of all, and the report is current that General Sedgwick, to whom it was first assigned, refused the undertaking. The Twelfth was in the first line of battle, and Colonel Smyth's orders were,—“I don't want a man in the Twelfth to fire a gun until the works of the enemy are reached.”

Two hundred paces of sloping plain, over which the enemy could sweep with grape and canister, was the distance to be passed. Eight a.m. was the appointed hour, and it was at six we were notified.

No brain is mighty enough to imagine the feelings, the thoughts that came rushing through the minds of all upon whom so weighty a task was imposed. There was hardly a man who thought of escaping without a wound. Many dared not to hope to see the setting of the sun. And oh, the thought for those at home! The morning was damp and chilly, and the men kept moving briskly around their stacks to warm their blood and drown desponding thoughts. Not a man was there who did not comprehend his trying situation, yet no man flinched. With nerves of iron the Twelfth would have sprang to the task. The hour arrived, and nothing but the signal

from the right was awaited. A little later, and knapsacks were ordered to be unslung and a man from each company left to guard them.

At this time General Warren left his staff, and riding as far to the front as he dared, dismounted, and, glass in hand, proceeded still nearer to and commenced to inspect the fortifications of the enemy. In plain view were the earthworks for artillery and infantry, and in front of this were felled trees with pointed boughs. For some time our commander viewed the situation, walking alone and in deep thought. It was evident to all that he too was not unanxious. Even General Hayes, who seems to love battle more than any man I ever before beheld, was then unusually quiet and thoughtful. Hour after hour rolled away, and still the bugle did not sound the charge. At twelve o'clock, noon, we were told that Warren had telegraphed to Meade that he could take the enemy's position, but another corps would have to hold it, as there would be no Second Corps.

What glorious news it was to us all the countermanding of the order for the charge! Our noble country would have known of a greater slaughter than that at Fredericksburg, and men and officers will feel thankful we resumed our position behind breastworks.

Report of the Treasurer for the second reunion was presented and read, and, on motion, accepted.

Roll called, and sixty-seven members responded.

No music having been provided to enliven the meeting, considerable discussion ensued, and the Executive Committee was ordered to procure the services of a good band for the reunion in 1879, it being the opinion of the majority of the comrades present, that a soldiers' reunion was a tame affair without a band of music.

The committee appointed to nominate officers for the ensuing year reported as follows:

President, Captain Frank M. Acton.

Vice-Presidents, Captain Charles P. Brown, Corporal William B. Gleason, Captain George A. Cobb, and Sergeant Joseph C. Watson.

Recording Secretary, Sergeant John Tonkin.

Corresponding Secretary, Lieutenant J. Morgan Barnes.

Treasurer, Hospital Steward Charles A. Weidemann.

Executive Committee, Colonel Henry F. Chew, Captain Frank M. Acton, Sergeant Henry M. Avis, Sergeant David Borton, Corporal Isaac A. Dubois and Comrade John B. Carey.

On motion, the above-named officers were unanimously elected, the Secretary casting the ballot.

The Corresponding Secretary offered the following resolutions, which were adopted:

Resolved, That the thanks of this society be and are hereby tendered to the Press of South Jersey, and the *State Gazette*, of Trenton, N. J., for their patriotism in publishing the call for the fourth annual reunion of the society. Also, to General William J. Sewell and Colonel Henry F. Chew, for their successful efforts in securing excursion tickets for the members of the society attending this reunion.

Resolved, That the thanks of the society be tendered to the Board of Freeholders for the use of the Court House this day.

At 1.00 p.m. the society adjourned for the annual dinner, which was served by Joseph Paul.

At 2.30 p.m. the society reassembled in the Court House, when informal remarks were made by several members.

Adjourned.

JOHN TONKIN, *Secretary.*