

Correspondence of the Press.

From Banks' Expedition.

EXPLOITS OF THE CONNECTICUT ENGINEERS.

NEAR CHARLESTONVILLE, LA., April 18, 1862.

To the Editor of the Press:—

On the 11th inst. this Regiment, together with the rest of Grover's division, started from Brahear City in a fleet of seven vessels—two of them being gunboats.

Ours was the St. Mary, a fine steamer of great size, but crowded, like the rest of the fleet, to her utmost capacity, the men being stowed literally as thickly as they could possibly be put on her decks. Without grumbling, however, they submitted to all the necessary inconveniences of the case, and looked forward, with joyous anticipation, to their approaching meeting with the traitorous enemy they were determined to conquer.

During the whole of Sunday, we slowly steamed up through the Atchafalaya river and Lakes Pauldre and Chestinache into Grand Lake—the object being to turn the left flank of the enemy on the Teche, while the main army under General Banks attacked them in front.

Early on Monday morning, the 13th, the landing was effected at a point (Irish Bend,) where the Teche, by an elbow to the eastward, approaches Grand Lake within a mile and a half. The landing was ineffectually opposed by the enemy's cavalry with one or two howitzers, but the 1st Louisiana and 13th Connecticut regiments soon cleared the ground for future operations, following the enemy so closely that he failed in his efforts to destroy the bridges over the Teche, and thus securing our passage of that deep and difficult Bayou, permitting our occupation of the road on its west bank, which was accomplished before dark on that night.

On the morning of the 14th our advance began, the movement being in a southward and westward direction on the enemy's left and rear about Franklin. The 3d Brigade, consisting of the 13th and 25th Conn., 25th Me., and 169th N. Y. regiments, under command of Col. H. W. Birge of the 13th, senior colonel and acting brigadier general, was thrown to the front, and the 25th was selected to skirmish on the extreme advance.

With the right wing deployed and the left in reserve, we moved on for about a mile and a half over old sugar-cane fields covered by deep ridges and rows of the last year's cultivation, and intersected by deep ditches, gradually approaching a point where the road, on our left, turned sharply at a right angle to the west, and entered a wood, leaving a rectangular space of about a mile in width, bounded on the east and south by the road and on the west by the woods. This space was the battle-field. In front of the woods on the west the old cane stood about two feet high, the rest of the field was open, but all intersected by the ridges and ditches already described.

As our line of skirmishers entered the rectangle (in charge of Col. Bisell in person) they became gradually engaged on the right with the enemy in the wood. The two right companies (A and F) were faced towards the fire, thus making a crotchet to the rear with the left of the skirmish line, the fire became hotter and sharper, and at length the enemy opened with two field pieces, from the point where the enemy entered the wood. Under this fire our reserves, under Lt. Col. Weld, were brought up to support the two companies engaged, and subsequently two pieces of our own artillery took position to reply to the enemy's guns, both batteries firing over the heads of the skirmishers.

The enemy's fire from the wood gradually slackened, and the order was given for the remaining companies of the right wing (who were still in their original line across the field and unengaged) to march, by their right, around the rear of our artillery, so as to take position towards the northwest corner of the lot and complete the clearing of the wood. As this movement was in progress, and these companies had passed beyond the guns, just taking their position, two of the enemy's regiments (the 18th La., and a regiment of Texans), who had crept on their bellies from the wood into the standing cane, suddenly rose and poured a murderous volley into the right flank of the forming companies and the skirmish line. At the same time the fire on our front was renewed with ten-fold vigor. As we subsequently learned, the enemy had been reinforced by troops brought up in the gunboat Diana from Franklin, and the 25th, with the 159th New York and 28th Maine on our left, was fighting 3,600 men.

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with the 139th New York and 26th Maine on our left, was fighting 3 500 men.

Our regiment was now all united, and under command of our glorious Colonel. Under his direction, and with a steadiness which won the admiration of all who saw it, the men would lie down in the furrows to load, then rise and fire into the very teeth of the enemy, and lie down again to reload; but they were melting away like snow, one in every three had been hit, the artillery had fallen back, and Col Birge, seeing that skirmish fighting must now give place to regular line-of-battle, ordered Col. Bissell to withdraw his regiment and reform them in the rear of the 91st New York when it should come up. It was time. We had been for an hour and a half utterly without support and under a heavy fire. We had lost nearly a third of our force in ten minutes, and our men were falling in their tracks by scores; but the 91st soon came on like a wall, and poured in a fire which warned the enemy in thunder tones of the fate before them. In their rear the 26th closed up into line of battle.

While this was going on in front, and the enemy was expending his whole strength in endeavoring to turn our right, the old 13th was quietly withdrawn from the front, passed across the road where it turned to the west, and at once moved on their left. That movement was simply victory. With the 13th on the flank and the rest on their front, the traitors fell back—the retreat became a rout, and until protected by the guns of the Diana they made no halt. The 13th took from their artillery a flag, a caisson and two limbers, and together with the 26th took a position in the woods within gunshot of Franklin, while the Diana in vain tried to drive us out with the unceasing rain of shells she poured hissing and shrieking through the branches. Before very long, however, we heard other guns below.—Weitzel, with the head of Banks' column, was at hand, the long rifled 30-pounders of the 21st Indiana sealed the fate of the often captured Diana. She was blown up; the enemy fled, utterly routed, through the back country roads only known to themselves. Weitzel's cavalry communicated with our skirmishers, and the battle was over.

—Now for our painful list of casualties. We have lost from this regiment, in all, 96, out of about 350 who went into action—9 killed, 77 wounded and 10 missing. Two officers were killed on the field: Capt. S. S. Hayden of Co. C, whose head was crushed with a piece of shell, and Lieut. D. P. Dewey of Co. A, who was wounded twice and finally shot through the forehead during the enemy's last charge. Captains Finkitt (D) and Harkness (I) were slightly wounded, Lieutenant Waterman (A) and Banning (E) severely, the first in the arm, the second in the thigh, and Lt. Oliver (B) dangerously in the head.

Of the conduct of our officers has our opinion

is known among us. Col. Blissell never laid down  
—never sheltered himself from the pitiless leaden  
shower which rained around him. One of the  
Texan prisoners we took asked when brought in  
who that Colonel in the "black hat" (not "white  
hat" as of old) was, for, said he, "I drew seven  
fair beads on him; why he wasn't hit the d—  
only knows!" Lt. Col. Wald did not seem to be  
any more excited than if writing an editorial for  
the *Homestead*, and the blood of green Erin showed  
all its historic bravery in our gallant Major. To  
the line officers, one and all, the same terms are  
applicable, and the reputation of the 26th is now  
worthy of old Connecticut.

—Since the battle we have followed unceasing-  
ly on the track of the routed rebels. We have  
made about twenty miles a day until last night,  
and have utterly broken up the army opposed to  
us. All the Texas troops have gone home, the  
local forces are entirely disbanded, the valley of  
the Teche is opened, Opelousas will be in our  
hands in two days, the great salt mine is aban-  
doned without a struggle, and our course to the  
Red river seems entirely open. "So mote it be."

Yours ever,  
ADJUDICATOR