

HEADQUARTERS CLEBURNE'S DIVISION
Near Harpers Ferry, July 16, 1863

CAPT. R. SETTLE
Co. E., 3rd Reg't C.S. Engineers

SIR: I have the honor to submit, on behalf of the detail of Co. E. members on detached service in Genl. Lee's late invasion of the North, the following report of the part taken by our company in the action of July 4, 5, and 6 last in that battle occurring near Gettysburg.

The "California Company" of the 18th Virginia was formed under the gallant and remarkable leadership of one Second Lieutenant Thomas Stein, late of the Richmond Howitzers. Having lost his six-pounder gun due to treacherous Yankees capturing and devouring his artillery horses, Col. Mann directed Lt. Stein to form a company of infantry so as to assist in Genl. Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania. At full strength, our company fielded ten enlisted and one officer at the engagement at Gettysburg. It was our privilege to be attached to the 38th Tennessee Inf. Regiment under the command of Capt. Duane Hamby, which formed the 1st Battalion of Cleburne's Division, presently under the command of Brig. Gen. Joseph Way. I am sure I speak for all members of our company when I say that the hospitality, kindness, and camaraderie extended by all the officers and men of Cleburne's Division to us "outsiders" was overwhelming.

Such was the great esteem with which we were received that Capt. Hamby made us the first company of his battalion. I had the honor of being named by Lt. Stein as first sergeant of our company, and served in this capacity until our short-lived company was shattered in the late charge led by Genl. Pickett (which I shall describe shortly in greater detail). In addition to myself and Lt. Stein, the First Company of the First Battalion of Cleburne's Division consisted of Cpl. Dale Franchak and Pvts Nick Franchak, Alex Galpin, Dan Kovell, and Patrick McElhaney of Hart's Engineers, and Pvts Don Kovell, Brad Jones, and Linn Jones of the Richmond Howitzers.

We were informed that our company would be participating in a small incursion by Genl. Heth into the nearby town of Gettysburg where it was said we could obtain some new shoes. Prior to this we participated in division-level drill on the morning of the first day of battle, and it is without exaggeration that I report our company having been the finest in the division. Any doubt that our hosts had about our soldiering abilities disappeared over the course of this drill and Hart's Engineers, the Richmond Howitzers, and West Coast reenacting in general was well represented. Throughout the battle our company received numerous compliments as to our conduct on the field, appearance, and performance under fire, and we have been warmly welcomed back to fight with the gentlemen of Cleburne's Division in the future.

The weather was less than desirable for the duration of the battle. Intermittent rain temporarily relieved the choking humidity. The heaviness of the air caused powder smoke to dissipate slowly, and at times visibility was very much reduced. Cleburne's Division joined the battle on the first day, where much to our surprise we encountered Federal cavalry at Gettysburg and, later that afternoon, Hardee-hatted Federal infantry. It was an incredible sight to observe *thousands* of Federal troops bearing down upon our lines, accompanied by the roar of dozens of artillery pieces and the incessant rattle of musketry. In this first engagement Cleburne's Division was the first Confederate infantry to enter the field, and as first company of the first battalion, we were at the very front of an extremely long column. Upon forming on the field we were engaged by irritating green-jacketed Federal sharpshooters, but we dispersed them with volley fire. We

advanced against the Federal infantry, determined to get those shoes, and drove them back splendidly for a time. Our company led the Division, and were the first Confederate infantry to engage the enemy. I cannot say how many cartridges we expended in this first battle, but it was certainly no less than fifty per man, and probably even more. Lt. Stein proved such an admirable leader that he was breveted to captain on the spot by the division commander. Advancing to a wooden fence our advance was hindered by growing numbers of Federal infantry, and taking severe casualties near a Lutheran seminary, we were compelled to halt at the fence. Here the fighting was fiercest as the Federals outnumbered us considerably and we could not get past the fence due to the volume of the enemy musketry. We did perform some service by tearing down the fence to allow fresh Confederate battalions to pass through rapidly, but our role in this engagement came to a close.

We rapidly reformed and marched back to our camp, expecting an evening of rest, but General Lee was determined to take the high ground on which a small cemetery was perched. Unfortunately, Cleburne's Division was so badly shot up that they were ordered to stand down for this battle. Brevet Captain Stein, however, was determined not to be left out of the fight and made the proper arrangements for our company to be attached to Ewell's Division, where we brought up the extreme rear of the Confederate forces and formed as the 8th Company of the 5th Battalion.

This second engagement on the first day was remarkable in its intensity. Never before have I heard such musketry, an incessant rippling of fire. By the time we reached the field and formed into line it was late evening and darkness was falling, along with a mist that turned into a steady rain. Advancing through galling fire against the enemy, we were compelled, as the far left flank of the 5th Battalion, to keep the dress of eight companies in darkness, rain, and uncooperative terrain. A stream about knee-deep bisected our line and could be forded only at one narrow point, and it was crossed under the direct fire of the enemy's guns and rifle-muskets from the hill with the cemetery just above us. I shall not forget one poor fellow from the company ahead of us who had the poor fortune to catch a Yankee minie ball as he was crossing the stream, and fell muddily into the water.

Reforming across the stream, pressing through trees and over a carpet of wounded from a previous wave, the Battalion halted within smoothbore range of the densely packed enemy lines and we commenced a vicious exchange of musketry. Though our enemy was only about thirty yards away, the rain, darkness, and thick powder smoke made it so that all we could see of our foes were their muzzle flashes. I cannot rightly recall how long we stood here and maintained a furious fire, as it seemed hours, but was probably about fifteen minutes. Fire was sustained and the carnage was unspeakable. That I emptied my entire cartridge box here is testimony to the ferocity of our attack against the Federals upon this cemetery hill, but ultimately we were compelled to withdraw. Again our lines crossed back over the stream but scarcely could we catch our breath before the Battalion was reformed and sent at the double-quick over to our left, where the Federals were attempting a counter attack.

Here, overzealous Yankees had attempted to exploit our withdrawal but instead found themselves in a sort of salient, exposed to fire from the front and both flanks. Our company was ordered into line on the enemy's left flank, and we poured a murderous fire into the enemy who stubbornly refused to yield. These three hundred or so Federals were soon subjected to the fire of perhaps a thousand Confederates, wrapped around the enemy in the shape of a horseshoe, their situation hopeless. Nearly everyone in our company had expended every round in his cartridge

box, but Brevet Captain Stein was prepared and had brought along packages of cartridges in his knapsack, which enabled us to keep up our fire. Despite the steady light rain, my own rifle-musket became too hot to even hold in my hands and was cooled only by sloshing the water from my canteen onto the blisteringly hot barrel. Upon the piece being cooled enough to safely handle again, I resumed my fire along with the rest of the company as the trapped Federals began at last to acknowledge their plight and surrender. We were prepared to receive their surrender but some amongst the shameless enemy continued to shoot at us, while others tried to flee to their lines, and we were compelled to shoot them down. Many prisoners were taken here, and this salvaged some of our honor despite having ultimately failed to seize the cemetery hill. Darkness now nearly complete, we again withdrew from the field.

We saw action on the second day only once, in the early evening, as Sickles' Corps of Yankees exposed themselves to our attack. In fierce fighting around the Klinge Farm our company, once again back with Cleburne's Division, advanced to a fence immediately in front of a stream, where a particularly gaudy-looking regiment of Zouaves was on the other side of the stream exactly opposite of us. After briefly exchanging fire, we noticed that these Zouaves had all but ceased fire, and had wildly shot through their ammunition (this is why soldiers should never be given repeating rifles). Now helpless, the wretched enemy commenced mocking and insulting us, and we returned the compliment, and such was the effect of our taunting that they right-faced and marched off the field in shame. Our dander was up and, if given the order, we could have charged all the way to Washington, but this engagement was ended prematurely and we marched back to our camp disgruntled and unsatisfied. Also in this engagement our numbers were reduced by one, as Private McElhaney, with much gallantry, stepped out of line to retrieve our colors which had fallen, but was shot himself in turn, and was taken off the field with a grievous wound that would prevent him from returning to the ranks on the next day. Should he eventually recover, as an act of Christian charity, we have all agreed to cancel his gambling debts.

On the third day we learned that Genl. Lee, having attempted previously to turn the Yankee flanks, was inclined to attempt an attack against the weak Federal center. Cleburne's Division, we were told, was to have the honor of being among the first to assault the enemy line, the first wave of the attack. Prior to our charge our artillery commenced a lengthy bombardment of the Federals, a thundering barrage from a line of guns that stretched from left to right as far as one could see. Behind the guns, in massive numbers, the Confederates formed for the attack. I am told over 8,000 Confederate troops had formed here to participate in this glorious charge, and we were confident that this was to be the last battle of the war. After the bombardment we stepped off across a wide open field and were subjected immediately to the artillery fire of the enemy. One Parrott shell burst very near us and showered us with earth. Muskets loaded, we advanced to the fence before the stream where we had stopped the day before, and gave the enemy behind his stone wall a volley from the entire division. Without pausing to reload, we tore down the wooden fence and crossed straight through the stream, getting wet up to our knees, and quickly reformed on the other side. We achieved this with the coolness and precision that one might find on a parade-ground drill. There, perhaps a hundred yards from the stone wall, under a galling fire, we reformed, gave the enemy a second volley, and charged into the waiting muzzles of thousands of Federals. Cleburne's Division was torn up on this ridge, with very few of our number even getting within several yards of the stone wall. Brevet Captain Stein, revolver in one hand and sword in the other, fell gloriously. A few of our company that survived the charge with

Cleburne's Division fell back, but joined up with the next wave and assaulted the wall again. This time we gained the stone wall, and I observed briefly a surge of butternut swarming over, but these gallant fellows were soon overcome by the enemy. Soon it was clear that the day was lost, and those of us who had fallen on and about the stone wall were suffered to endure our triumphant enemies cry "Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!"

After this assault was repulsed, and not for lack of effort among those who participated in it, Genl. Lee retired his army from Pennsylvania and withdrew towards Virginia. Here our company was disbanded and, our period of special detached service in the East concluded, we have been ordered to report back to our respective units and ordinary duties.

I remain, Sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant

CPL. BRETT GIBBONS

Formerly Acting First Sergeant,

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Cleburne's Division, A.N.V.