

THE DEMOCRATIC WATCHTOWER.



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Correspondence of the Southern Advocate
The 4th Alabama Regiment.

IN CAMP NEAR MANASSAS, July 31.

When the news of of the battle and victory at this place on the 21st inst, flashed over the wires to us in Huntsville, deep solicitude for the safety of those dear to all prompted a trip to this place by many. The trains were crowded all along, the depots thronged; the hotels overrun, and comfort no longer possible. Manassas reached at last, protected by a passport from Richmond, the camp of the glorious 4th was found on the 28th after a five mile tramp from the railroad. The Regiment was in the wood, sans tents and other essentials of camp life, and on short rations. Three months of soldier life had wrought a change in the appearance of the boys—bronzed by the sun, hardened by discipline and self reliant they seemed for service not for show. *And they had seen service*—in camp on the march, sleeping on the ground, wading rivers, encountering drenching rains, with half rations at times, and at last they had the desire of their hearts gratified: They met the enemy, and bore the brunt of the fight, went in iron, were baptized in fire and came out tempered steel! To meet the survivors of such a regiment—to see those so familiar to us who had endured so much, breasted such danger and won so high renown, was a pleasure indeed! They were Alabama's sons—sent forth to defend homes and altars. They had been tried and had not been found wanting. They had been put in the front of danger and met it undaunted. They had been placed in the van, and nobly staid the tide of battle, tinging it with their blood, until it was turned back in dismay. Alabama has just cause to be proud of the gallant 4th, so ably and daringly led by Col. E. J. Jones, one of her native sons. The slopes of Manassas were made red with their blood!

A sight of the battle field, with its gentle swells, open glades, narrow ravines, clumps of woods, farm house &c, is necessary to give one a clear perception of the advanced, exposed, and important position assigned to the 7th and 8th Georgia 4th Alabama, Maj. Wheats battallion, Hampton's Legion, &c. The enemy distracted the attention of the centre and right by a feint attack, while he, by treachery crossed Bull Run and poured his masses on our left, by an adroit flank movement, which if successful, would have rendered the batteries at Manassas useless. The battle was thus made by about 8,000

of our troops; resisting this flank movement. For hours our troops were engaged at musket and cannon range with the very choice regiments of their Grand Army. The front of battle instead of being on the main line of our defenses was on one of the ends—the left. In planning the battle Gen. Scott displayed his great military genius and knowledge of our position. Its execution was thwarted by the pluck and skill of our soldiers, who fought like brave men long and well, and piled the ground with Lincoln slain.

The 4th Alabama occupied an open gentle slope, the enemy the reverse side of the hill which was much steeper, and in addition were protected by fence, farm outhouses, hay racks, &c., &c. The distance was about 125 yards. They could load behind the hill, advance to the brow fire at our men and then in a few steps get out of sight. Our men had no protection at all. They fired as they saw the enemy on the brow, about the farm houses, &c., and had to lie down to load. In this situation they fought for near two hours, having made a double quick march of 8 miles in one hour to get on the ground. It was here that gentle, brave, chivalrous and cultivated Lieut. J. C. Turner fell, encouraging his young comrades; frank generous and gallant Capt. L. E. Lindsey died; where Wm. Landman full of generosity and geniality, was shot; where our friend and relative W. L. Lorraine and many other noble spirits met a soldier's death.—Four regiments were fighting the 4th Alabama in front, and Sherman's battery was so placed as to be able to fire into our whole front. The efficiency of our batteries behind on the distant elevations gave great relief by firing shot and shell into the enemy's ranks over the heads of our men.

The enemy at last unable to drive our troops back, commenced a new flank movement on the right and left of our narrow front of battle. The letter V will illustrate the position and movement; the broad opening of the V being the front of battle, the masses of the enemy on the right and left sides of the V converging to a point to hem our soldiers in. Seeing this, the order to fall back was given. Still our brave boys fought for half an hour longer and then fell back just in time to get out of the V, exposed to a fire in front, left and right. It was in the retreat that Col. E. J. Jones was wounded; also, Lt. Col. Law, and Maj. Scott. Col. Jones could not be carried off the field, and was with Phil Bradford a prisoner for 4 hours; both were kindly treated by the enemy. The Regiment three times made battle and when without a head, still fought on; was led by Gen. Bee to the charge in which he was killed.—Its officers and its men displayed the coolness and steadiness of veterans. Never under fire before, they endured its blaze and heat as if feasting upon the frosted Caucasus. The stoic calmness of its Colonel was moved to unwonted joyousness on the battle field, and his men love him for his

military skill and daring. Many individual acts and narrow escapes are recorded by the boys, and almost all received shots in their clothes. The chaplain of the regiment [Rev. W. D. Chadick] fought with the utmost gallantry.

The brunt of the battle was borne by a few of our troops because a portion were thrown out by the bribery of a Railroad employee who was shot, and by the miscarriage of important orders. When however Gen. Kirby Smith's Brigade came in the rear and the other forces were being brought to the support of our exhausted troops the battle was won—the panic became general and the flight fast and furious. The rest was a slaughter ending with night. The enemy fought well, were well trained, thoroughly equipped, with arms superior to ours, and they shot well, too. How then were they so signally if not disgracefully routed? "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera;" and God was on our side strengthening our men to stand up against the large odds, and at last striking a panic into the hearts of the enemy. It was not the wisdom of man that gained the battle, but the God of Justice fighting for the cause of truth and Liberty. So may it ever be and give Him the praise.

The members of the 4th regiment have not had any just meed of praise awarded them. The Richmond papers have been strangely oblivious of a regiment in the fight that had 37 killed and 153 wounded out of about 600 engaged—losing every field officer. Unlike the forces from other States this regiment does not carry a correspondent to blow its deeds. It asks but that justice may be done it by the citizens of its own State. There is weeping I know, over the State—for has not Florence, Huntsville, Jackson county, Marion, Selma, Tuskegee, etc., lost their bravest and best? When called, on Alabama can point to the 4th regiment as her first oblation on the altar of Southern Independence. In after times it will be a coveted honor to say, I was of the 4th, Alabama at Manassas—I saw our Colonel, Lt. Colonel and Major fall—I saw Gen. Bee fall at our head—I saw the regiment in fragments still fighting on, saving its flag—I heard of Gen. Johnston's shedding tears at our being so cut to pieces, and I am now, praise God, alive to witness the independence of the land that day helped so greatly to secure.

But I must close—the camp life is new to me, and the sight of tents all over the country excites mingled emotions of pride and regret. I close for want of time and convenience to write more. The boys generally are well and hearty, satisfied that they have done the State some service, which is deserving of better treatment than they have received since the battle, from gross carelessness somewhere.

Yours,
W. B. F.