

We will not go into details but, while Kershaw's men were gone, General Lee had been able to maintain the stalemate around Petersburg; however, since leaving General Early on the 15th, a disaster had occurred in the Valley. As soon as Sheridan learned, through a "lady" spy in Winchester, that Kershaw's troops had left to rejoin Lee, he prepared to attack. He was totally successful in a battle at Winchester in driving the Rebel forces out. Early's defeated Southerners made a stand back on Fisher's Hill and, a few days later, the Yankees routed them there again mainly due to their cavalry giving way on the left causing "Old Jube" to say, "I would give a hundred dollars to see a dead cavalryman." Early's beaten troops fell back to Brown's Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Port Republic. Jubal and his small group needed help again, BAD!

Somehow Anderson and Kershaw learned of Early's plight and the division was ordered to double-back ASAP in order to help stop "Little Phil". General Wofford would remain at Gordonville due to his injuries received from his fall at Guard Hill, He would not be with his brigade for the balance of the Shenandoah Campaign and in fact would only spend a few days with the Army of Northern Virginia for the remainder of the war. He received what many soldiers, sailors and marines who are engaged in the hottest action long for; an injury or wound just serious enough to warrant a furlough but not serious enough to prevent one from enjoying his time at home. He returned home by a roundabout route to Cassville in North Georgia to find his home destroyed by Sherman's Army and his wife and child living with her folks in Spring Place east of Dalton. I believe that Col. C. C. Sanders was in command of the brigade later at Cedar Creek and the remainder of the Valley Campaign.(?)

At sunrise on the 25th, the travel-weary men of Company B and the remainder of Wofford's Brigade and the other brigades of Kershaw's Division set out to find their beaten comrades. They made a hasty, forced march, going 12 miles before even halting for a rest. They went cross country through Barboursville and Standardsville then crossed the Blue Ridge at Swift Run Gap and on through Port Republic then down to Brown's Gap and joined Early's army around noon on the 26th of September, a sunny, warm day. They found Early's troops to be demoralized but their spirits were lifted when they saw Kershaw's troops rejoining them. They camped that night near the Shenandoah River.

The following account is from the diary of Jed Hotchkiss, "Stonewall's" mapmaker, who was now a member of General Early's staff and also who was with him at Brown's Gap:

"Sept. 26-Kershaw's Division came up from Swift Run Gap and joined us about noon.

Sept. 28-Wednesday-I guided Kershaw by Mt. Meridan to New Hope. A mile beyond New Hope we took the Waynesboro Road. We encountered the enemy's cavalry pickets near the Hermitage, 5 miles from Waynesboro and drove them back. Encamped near Waynesboro at a late hour. A fine day, rain in PM.

September 29-30-Remained near Waynesboro.

October 1-Guide Kershaw [and the Legion] by the road from Waynesboro to the Willow Pump and took 3 miles beyond Mt. Sidney on the Valley Turnpike. Misted rain all day.

Oct. 2-Remained in camp all day. Warm day.

Oct. 3-In camp.

Oct. 4-In camp. Fine day.

Oct. 5-In camp.

Oct. 6-Early left Harrisonburg. We followed, Gordon in front then Kershaw [down the Valley or north].

Oct.7- Moved as far as New Market."(14)(15)

As the reinforced Confederates moved down the Valley, Sheridan's 60,000-man army slowly retreated. Early's much smaller army, probably numbering no more than 15,000 available to fight, passed through Harrisonburg, New Market and Woodstock, marching a day or two and then resting an equal time. Kershaw's men had now been cut off from the outside world for two months and the nearest railroad was at Staunton and they were getting further from it every day. It was hard marching and some of the soldiers were without shoes.(16) Even the good Valley Turnpike was tough marching for those with no shoes. The Legion had received very little mail since they had left on the campaign and they were more homesick than ever. They especially were anxious to know about their families now that Sherman had cut their state in two.

Back to the Hotchkiss diary:

"Oct. 8-Remained in camp, snowed and hailed some, windy and cold.

Oct. 9-Kershaw marched to Rude Hill to meet advance of the enemy but they came only to Mt. Jackson.

Oct. 10 & 11-In camp, heavy frost.

Oct. 12-Marched at dawn. Kershaw [and the Legion] camped between Narrow Passage and Woodstock."(17)(18)

Kershaw's troops reached Strasburg on the 13th of October, 1864. There had been fighting all day in their front and "a bloody little battle" developed, killing and wounding quite a number.(19)

The Confederates withdrew after this action and took up a position where they had been before on Fisher's Hill. Fisher's Hill is a bluff reaching out from Massanutten Mountain on the right. Beyond its northern base ran Cedar Creek. Things settled down for a few days and the men were allowed some rest. The dead were buried and the wounded were sent back. The hungry Rebels sent their foragers out in every direction to hunt for anything to eat that they could find-fresh milk, butter, eggs, fruit, apple butter such as only the Valley of Virginia can produce. Occasionally a jug of good "corn", apple jack or peach brandy would be found.(20)

The Hotchkiss diary resumes:

"Oct. 14-Spent day at Fisher's Hill. Wharton put on right at Fisher's Hill then Kershaw then Gordon-----.

Oct. 15-Saturday.Spent day at Fisher's Hill.

Oct 16-All quiet.

Oct. 17-Kershaw advanced to (?) of the middle road-----.

Oct. 18-Plan of attack [Gordon's] formed. Kershaw [with Wofford's Brigade and the Legion] to go through Strasburg, Gordon to go around end of mountain go to Bowman's Mill near the mouth of Cedar Creek and cross and advance over the front of the line of enemy breastworks. Kershaw started before midnight. Fine day, cool."(21)(22)

This was the famous Battle of Cedar Creek which the Rebels **WON BIG** in the morning and **LOST EVEN BIGGER** in the afternoon.

On the night of the 18th, Kershaw's men including the Legion were ordered to march from their position on Fisher's Hill below Strasburg at midnight. No noise was to be allowed on the about two-mile march as the enemy was to be completely surprised at sunrise the next morning. Gordon's men would march by a little-known mountain path over a spur of Massanutten Mountain and strike the sleeping or awakening enemy in flank and rear away off to the right. Kershaw would strike their front once Gordon began the fight. The enemy occupied an excellent forward line of breastworks which followed along the north bank of Cedar Creek some distance back of and up a slope of about 50 feet above the creek. An abatis of pine trees with branches sharpened into points about five feet from the trunks was in front of the breastworks. These were perched side by side and on top of each other, making it almost impossible for a single man to get through, much less a line of battle. All along the line were great redoubts made of earth and surrounded by deep ditches which held the artillery. Their main defense line centered on the Belle Grove house, which was Sheridan's headquarters, extending to both sides of the Valley Pike. Gordon moved out at nightfall and had to march single file along the path and onto the plain which lay behind the enemy breastworks. Just at dawn, Kershaw's troops attacked and were followed in just a few minutes by Gordon's completely surprising the Yankees. Each brigade took up the charge with Kershaw's men and the Legion quickly getting through the abatis. Soon, the entire Union line gave way with the now wide-awake Yankees fleeing in every direction with wild abandon, shoeless, hatless, horseless and even leaving their guns and everything else behind. Such confusion and panic had never before been seen by the men from Dixie.

The Confederate line soon became as confused as the enemy's. Breakfast cooking was too much of a temptation to many of the Rebs who stopped to help themselves to the food. They gathered up shoes, blankets, clothing, food and such luxuries that they forgot had existed. Valuable time was lost during this but the enemy was still on the run. After a further chase, Early called a halt north of Middletown most of

the fighting being over by 9:00 AM. He felt that too much time had been lost due to the plundering of the enemy camps and that enough already had been accomplished, besides, he needed to re-form behind the stone fences. He made the statement to John B. Gordon, "We had had enough glory for one day." He had no idea that the enemy could possibly re-form and counterattack. Some of the men fell asleep while others admired and rejoiced over their plunder. John B. Gordon was furious that Early would not continue the pursuit of the enemy. The Federals established their new defensive line about a mile further up and perpendicular to the Pike facing the Confederate line.

Wofford's Brigade was on the right of Kershaw's Division as they began their march at midnight. Each man was supplied with 60 rounds of ammunition. They marched in the direction of Strasburg by the Turnpike then turned to the right on a little road which they followed until they came up on the enemy's campfires. Here, a halt was ordered till about 5AM at which time the surprise trap was sprung. Wofford's Brigade somehow drifted to the right, completely separated from the division just as they had done at Antietam and Chancellorsville, and fought with Wharton's Cavalry. They took everything in their front routing the startled Yankees while capturing their camps with all the goodies.

If the battle had ended at this point, Early would have become one of the South's greatest heroes. Unfortunately, the day was still young.

"Little Phil" Sheridan was not with his army when the surprise attack took place. He had attended a meeting with Grant in Washington and had just reached Winchester on his return when he began to hear cannon fire from the south where his army was entrenched approximately 20 miles away. He mounted his very large horse "Rienzi" and raced toward the action. (The big black gelding's was called Rienzi before the famous ride but afterwards it he was called "Winchester".) After reaching the battlefield, he changed mounts to "Breckinridge", a fine Kentucky thoroughbred which had been captured from the Southern general at Missionary Ridge. His legs were so short that the stirrups were level with the bottom of the saddle blanket. He was, however, a good rider and had an excellent mount and made good time. He soon began to meet his fleeing troops, so many packing the Turnpike that he was forced to ride in the fields alongside the road. "Little Phil's" appearance on the big horse was a confidence-builder to the demoralized men and he was able to begin rallying them to return with him and many did.

In short, he reached the field, organized the corps into something manageable, attacked the Rebels at around 4:00 PM and completely reversed the morning's battle, routing the Rebels which resulted in the greatest comeback of the war. His attack had been almost as much of a surprise to the Rebels as their attack in the early morning had been to the Yankees. For an excellent account of this strange battle read *From Winchester to Cedar Creek-The Shenandoah Campaign of 1864* by Jeffrey D. Wert.

The Hotchkiss diary has the following account of the battle: "Oct. 19- Took Kershaw to his position above Brown's Mill. He was there by 5 AM. Kershaw advanced across Cedar Creek in gallant style and in almost a moment he was up the hill and over the breastworks. In conjunction, he, with Gordon, swept over the 8th and 19th corps and drove them in wild confusion across Meadow Run upon the 6th corps and through Middletown. New line formed at Middletown at right angle to the pike. Gordon on the left toward Stickley's; then Kershaw across the ridge; then Ramsuer down the slope to Meadow Run, Peagram from that up to the Turnpike; Wharton to the right with Wofford's Brigade of Kershaw's Division on his right at the angle of the Cedarsville and Bucktown Roads, then Payne's cavalry extending to the woods. Enemy reformed and advanced on the left at 4:30 and soon everything was in full retreat. Early said, 'The Yankees got whipped and we got scared.' Disaster. Oct. 20: Back to New Market."(23)(24)

I have not found anyone from Company B that was killed during the Battle of Cedar Creek. Private Clark White was listed as captured at Strasburg which was a part of this battlefield. Major William McDaniel, who had only recently been promoted from captain of Company B to major of the Legion, was severely wounded sometime during the campaign but was not captured. He was forced to retire from the army due to his hip and thigh wounds.

The Legion was posted on the extreme right of the Rebel line and the giveaway started much further to the left with Gordon's troops. They probably were not involved in the heaviest of the fighting of the afternoon but they were heavily involved with the rout of their old nemesis of Crampton's Gap, the VI Corps with their Greek Cross, during the morning and enjoyed the luxuries of their deserted camps. They were among the last to give way and start for the rear. As could be expected, the troops leading the counterattack were the Legion's closest associates across the line, the infernal VI Corps. The men from Bowdon must have almost known some of these troops by their first names by now since they had encountered them so many times and unfortunately would encounter them one more time before the war was over.

Once the Confederate line broke, there was no stopping it. Brigade after brigade, seeing friendly troops running, felt it was time for them to leave. It was every man for himself. At this stage of the war, the men paid little attention to their officers and even "Old Jube" just sat on his horse, shaking his head and chewing on his tobacco while watching once proud soldiers running for their lives. "He was mad as H--- and shouted out to some of the frightened men, Run, run, G-- D--- you. They will get you." No one paid him any attention. The soldiers abandoned their arms and everything else that might slow them down. Most of the supply train and artillery were lost due to several of the pieces having been jammed onto a stone bridge at Strasburg which broke preventing others from crossing. There most of the wagons and supplies captured in the morning along with twenty-four of Early's precious cannon had to be abandoned to the closely pursuing Yankee Cavalry. Back up the Valley, the disorganized men continued after a short stop at their previous position on Fisher's Hill, then up the Pike as far as New Market, 50 or so miles from the battle, where the men were gathered together into some sort of organization. The weary, hungry and embarrassed troops could hardly face the people of the Valley because they were ashamed. But they were alive. Later, they would enjoy reminiscing and laugh about how fast they ran and who ran the fastest.

Sheridan missed a golden opportunity by not pushing the Rebel position at New Market. He did follow them for a distance but then withdrew toward Winchester, destroying crops, burning buildings and stealing livestock as he went. Grant had given him orders to rid the Valley of Rebels once and for all. They were to burn and destroy so that the Valley would never again be able to support a Southern army. "If a crow was to fly over the Shenandoah Valley, it would have to carry its dinner." "Little Phil" was only too happy to carry out this order.

Kershaw's troops, including the Legion, remained in the Valley until November 15.

The Hotchkiss diary states:

"Nov. 10-Marched down valley at sunrise, Kershaw in front-----camped beyond Woodstock.

Nov. 11-Marched at 6 AM Pegram in front, Kershaw in rear. Found enemy's pickets posted in Newtown. Kershaw on left. Day raw and cold. [We can only hope that the men of Company B were able to capture some good Yankee shoes and warm clothing and blankets at Cedar Creek and were able to hold onto them].

Nov. 13-Sunday. Moved at daylight back up the valley, camped at Pence's Hill on the south bank of Strong Creek.

Nov. 14-In camp.

Nov. 15-Kershaw started for Richmond. Cold and rainy."(25)(26)

Early's Valley Campaign might be considered a complete loss; yet, looking at it another way, maybe it was not a loss at all. He had prevented the Union from sending large bodies of men to Grant to help in his fight against Lee. This is another big "if" but, if the victory of the morning at Cedar Creek had been followed up and Sheridan's army defeated, Washington would have been threatened again and Grant would have had to send troops from Petersburg, allowing Lee maybe to take the offensive.

Early, with the rag-tag, demoralized and beaten troops he had left, remained in or around the Valley until the next year and managed to keep Sheridan there also. In late November, even Gordon, with his division, left him with even fewer men. He was eventually totally defeated and had no other command during the war.

The Legion, along with Kershaw's Division, had returned to the Richmond area in mid November and had taken up a defensive position on the north side of the James River and had begun building winter quarters on the extreme left of the Richmond defenses about seven miles out of the city. Everything remained fairly quiet on their front through November, December and into January. They were now getting mail and even boxes from home but it was still a sad Christmas of 1864 for the courageous and lonely Bowdon Volunteers who dreamed of home and happy times.

Kershaw's Division, Wofford's Brigade, Cobb's Legion and Company B, was now back under the command of General James Longstreet who had recovered enough from the throat wound, received in the Wilderness last May to take command of the armies on the north side of the James River.

It was a gloomy winter for the South. Lee, with the largest part of his army, was under siege at Petersburg and getting weaker every day while General Grant's army opposing him was continually getting stronger with Sheridan sending his infantry from the Valley to him and, with Washington no longer threatened, troops were available from there. "The Gallant Hood of Texas" had indeed "played hell in Tennessee", having suffered terrible defeats at Franklin and Nashville in November and December with the Army of Tennessee being all but destroyed. Sherman had marched across Georgia trying to outburn Hunter and Sheridan, taken Savannah at Christmas time and was now marching and burning through South Carolina.

In January, Wofford's Brigade lost their good friends who had been with them for most of the war. Kershaw's old brigade, now under the command of General Kennedy, was allowed to go home to South Carolina to try in helping save their homes from General Sherman. The Legion hated to see them go. The South Carolinian's old commander, General Kershaw, would remain in Virginia and continue to lead his division of which Wofford's Brigade and Cobb's Legion was a part.

There was little semblance to divisional, brigade or regimental structure left anyway. Divisions numbered less than a good brigade should be. Brigades numbered less than a standard regiment numbered in 1861 and some regiments numbered less than what a good company should muster. Companies were no more than a few men in some cases.

There were rumors of peace negotiations underway. Perhaps the South could salvage something out of this terrible war and be an independent nation?

The picture in the winter of 1865 was not a rosy one for the Bowdon Volunteers. Would spring bring more fighting and, if so, where would it be? How much longer could this war go on and when, if ever, could they get to go home to Bowdon?



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