

Northern Kentucky Views Presents

Bragg's Campaign in Kentucky, 1862



From

THE SOUTHERN BIVOUAC,
A MONTHLY LITERARY AND HISTORICAL MAGAZINE



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Louisville, Kentucky

1886

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GENERAL BRAXTON BRAGG.

GENERAL SMITH advancing, as I have said, through Big Creek and Rogers' gaps, pressed on as rapidly as the difficult nature of the rugged country he was traversing would permit, and on the 24th of August reached Barbourville, Kentucky. Thence he directed his march straight for Lexington. On the 29th his cavalry, under Colonel John Scott, encountered the Federal cavalry, under Colonel Metcalfe, on what is known as the Big Hill, fifteen miles from Richmond, and routed

it. On the next day, the 30th of August, General Smith attacked two brigades of Nelson's corps, which had been improvised for the defense of Central Kentucky out of regiments recently recruited, and, defeating, absolutely dissolved them. General Fry speaks of this combat in terms which seem more intended to palliate disaster than to justly represent its character. He says, "This affair was called the battle of Richmond. In his report of the engagement, Cruft, one of our brigade com-

manders, said it was an attack by fifteen thousand soldiers on six thousand, two hundred and fifty citizens." It is true that the Confederate soldiery engaged were veterans as compared with their opponents. Yet the latter, although but a brief time in the field, were thoroughly organized, had received some instruction, and were better armed and far better equipped and supplied than the troops who defeated them. Nor had General Smith even the half of fifteen thousand men actually in the fight. He had marched with great celerity. His troops, poorly shod, had suffered severely on the flinty mountain roads; they had subsisted for ten days almost entirely on green corn, and his column was necessarily so prolonged that he could employ only a fraction of his entire force in a conflict which he felt compelled to seek and hasten. He had entered the State with barely twelve thousand infantry and artillery. He was able to deliver battle at Richmond, on the 30th, with little more than six thousand men.

His victory, however, was complete. The Federal forces opposed to him were not only routed, but disintegrated, and marching to Lexington, he entered that city September 1st. He was in absolute strategic possession of all Central Kentucky upon the moment that he did so, nearly to Covington upon the north, and almost so far as Louisville on the west. Lexington was then the terminus of the Kentucky Central Railroad, and of the Louisville and Lexington; and although neither road was of much service to the Confederates, from the fact that the greater part of the rolling stock on each had been removed beyond reach before the capture of the place, they yet derived some benefit from the possession while entirely depriving the enemy of their use.

Within a day or two after his occupation of Lexington, General Smith dispatched Heth with five or six thousand men toward Covington, and that officer approached so closely that the most serious apprehensions were felt for the safety of Cincinnati. He could doubtless have taken that city if he had made the attempt immediately upon reaching its vicinity, but such a *coup* was not embraced in, it seems, but rather forbidden by his instructions. General Smith apparently expected daily notice from General Bragg that a junction of their respective forces was required for decisive battle with Buell, and preferred to hold every thing well in hand for a movement of so much importance.

On the 17th of September, the Federal General, George Morgan, evacuated Cumberland Gap, and pushed with all possible dispatch for the Ohio. This released Stevenson, who instantly followed with the whole force under his command. About the same time General Humphrey Marshall was entering Kentucky from Virginia, through Pound Gap, with about three thousand men, and he was directed, with the assistance of some six hundred cavalry under General John H. Morgan, to confront and detain George Morgan until Stevenson could overtake him and force him to battle in the mountains, surrounded by assailants.

Marshall, however, did not reach the scene of operations in time to take part in the programme, and Stevenson marched directly to Lexington instead of pursuing the enemy. John H. Morgan, with the cavalry detailed for that purpose, placed himself directly in front of the Federal column at West Liberty on the morning of the 25th of September, and was constantly engaged in skirmishing with it until the evening of October 1st. During that time it marched only thirty miles. October 1st John Morgan was ordered by General Smith to rejoin the army, and George Morgan continued his march unmolested to the Ohio.

General Bragg, as has been stated, concentrated at Glasgow on the 14th, and Buell was then just reaching Bowling Green. Bragg declined the challenge to battle which Buell immediately proffered, and maneuvered apparently to place himself more directly between his adversary and Louisville, in which purpose he perfectly succeeded.

Chalmers, having been sent with twelve or thirteen hundred men to take position upon the Louisville and Nashville Railroad at Cave City, for some unexplained reason departed from his instructions and attacked Munfordsville, a formidable position naturally, and strongly fortified. He was repulsed after a sharp action. On the 17th the garrison, some four thousand strong, surrendered when Bragg arrived with his entire army. It would have been impossible for Buell to have continued his march to Louisville had General Bragg offered determined opposition. Even conceding him numerical superiority, the position Buell would have been compelled to assault if he had moved directly upon Munfordsville and attacked the Confederate army posted there, would have more than counterbalanced such advantage. He could not have forced that position; every assault would have been met with certain and

bloody repulse, and repulse under such circumstances meant disastrous defeat and ultimate ruin to an army situated as was Buell's. But it is positively certain that General Bragg had it in his power to have outnumbered Buell at that date at any point where collision was at all probable or possible, and he has been justly criticised for not having availed himself of the rare opportunity he then had of compelling a battle in which he could combine the advantages of odds and position.

Having left a garrison at Nashville at least eight thousand strong, Buell could not have mustered more than thirty-eight thousand men after penetrating into Kentucky. In this estimate no reduction of his strength is presumed because of the ordinary casualties of the march and campaign. As his troops were veterans thoroughly seasoned, and he had as yet done no fighting, such diminution of his numbers must have been very slight. I have never seen a field-return, or indeed any estimate of the troops General Bragg had at Munfordsville on the 17th fit for duty. But deducting the losses sustained by Chalmers in his engagement, stragglers and details, he must have had an efficient infantry force of nearly if not quite twenty-nine thousand men. But it must be remembered that before Bragg reached Munfordsville Kirby Smith had been for more than two weeks (seventeen days) at Lexington. Immediately upon his entrance into Kentucky, or indeed upon leaving Sparta, in Tennessee, for his objective point was then Glasgow, General Bragg could have dispatched Smith instructions to march from Lexington and effect a junction with him at Glasgow or Munfordsville. He knew, of course, the date when he would arrive at either point; and he had resolved—as perfectly as he could be said to have determined upon any programme in his then mental temper—both to attempt the capture of Bowling Green and to bar Buell's passage to Louisville.

Numerous excellent roads lead from Lexington to Glasgow, through a bounteous and well-watered region. The distance is only about one hundred and thirty miles by the most practicable and direct routes for troops. General Smith could have set out from Lexington on the 3d of September—the third day after he had entered the place—with his entire force rested and well in hand, and making marches not nearly so fatiguing as those which had carried him over the mountains of Kentucky, have gotten to Glasgow by the 13th, the same

day upon which Bragg arrived. Nothing could have prevented their junction, for Smith had already dispersed or destroyed every organized Federal force in Northern and Central Kentucky, and Buell was on the other side of Bragg. General Smith's loss was very small at Richmond. Deducting that loss, and such garrison as he might have deemed it necessary to leave at Lexington, and his cavalry, which it was necessary to actively employ in harassing George Morgan's retreat, in front of Covington and in the vicinity of Louisville, he could have taken more than ten thousand infantry to General Bragg's assistance. If this computation be correct, Bragg would have been able to have outnumbered Buell at any point where the collision might have occurred. Had Buell attempted to turn Munfordsville while the Confederate forces were massed there, he would only have exposed himself to still greater danger; for his column, prolonged and taken in flank, must have been destroyed. He knew this, and with the wise audacity born of true soldierly prudence, moved during the whole period of the emergency right upon his enemy's front.

I have already spoken of the vacillation and incertitude of purpose which General Bragg began to exhibit at this juncture, and which, increasing with every day, finally lost him all the fruits of his previously brilliant and successful strategy, and came near ruining his army. He displayed this infirmity of resolution signally at Munfordsville. He wrote to Richmond on the 17th of September, the day that he took Munfordsville, that his junction with Kirby Smith was assured, and that Buell could not escape them, nor successfully resist their combined forces. He instructed General Polk on the 19th to recall certain detachments and have his corps concentrated and ready for battle, which he said was imminent, as Buell was advancing to attack. Yet, on the same day, with no change in the condition of affairs which any one has ever been able to point out, or, perhaps, conceive, he ordered his trains to be moved immediately to Bardstown, and began marching the army to that place at daylight the next morning. Buell, finding his way to Louisville unexpectedly opened, pressed on rapidly and without even a menace from his apparently bewildered antagonist.

General Bragg has offered an excuse for this singular and fatal step, by which he surrendered a rare and almost unprecedented strategic advantage, which—it is doing him no

wrong to declare—is utterly fallacious and untenable. He thus explains his retirement from Munfordsville in his official report: "Reduced at the end of four days to three days' rations, and in a hostile country, utterly destitute of supplies, a serious engagement brought on any where in that direction could not fail (whatever its results) to materially cripple me. The loss of a battle would be eminently disastrous."

What General Bragg meant by saying he was in a "hostile country" must be left to conjecture. If he termed it hostile because it was not part of a seceded State, and had recently been in undisputed possession of the enemy, such facts afforded a flimsy pretext for his action, for he certainly knew all that perfectly well before he entered Kentucky, and, indeed, was largely induced to come by such considerations. If he meant that the sentiment of the people was hostile to the Confederates, he was mistaken. If he did not know that the sympathies of the population, in the midst of which he was then operating, was largely in his favor, he was strangely ignorant of an important fact, which, as a commander, he should have known, and which was certainly well known to every one save himself. Nor is his description of that country as being "destitute of supplies" more accurate. On the contrary, the general country which General Bragg then controlled, and to which his commissaries had free and easy access, abounded with supplies. Of course they were not collected in large quantities at points convenient for his use. That was his work—not the business of the people. But with the organization and effort which is necessary to provision large bodies of men, in a region suddenly occupied, there would have been little difficulty and no failure to keep the troops adequately rationed. I heard some complaint from infantry commissaries, during the time the army was in Kentucky, that the milling facilities were not what might have been expected in a State so fertile and populous, but no difficulty was suggested then which could be called or was deemed insuperable, or even serious to ordinary care and energy. Yet, even if the country immediately about Munfordsville was "destitute of supplies," General Bragg had the "Bluegrass region" and Kirby Smith to feed him; and that he could rely on succor from that quarter had already been proven, for on the 19th of September—the day on which he issued orders to retire to Bardstown—a supply train, forwarded by General Smith, had reached him. But this

explanation was evidently an afterthought. General Bragg knew, as well as any one, the difficulty of supplying an army on the march, and without depots of provisions, in any sort of country; and he must have taken it into consideration when he advanced with such celerity and to so great a distance. He manifestly meant to live upon the country, wherever he might happen to be, until he had gained a decisive victory, and had leisure to establish depots. It was clearly his intention, at one time, to supply his army by capturing Bowling Green and the stores collected there; and we are justified, by all the circumstances and General Bragg's own utterances, in believing that, however limited his commissariat may have been, he was induced, by doubts and fears of an altogether different nature, to abandon his matured purpose of fighting and beating Buell somewhere south of Louisville.

He unquestionably threw away his most favorable opportunity to strike a blow which would be decisive and sure to secure him permanent advantage, when he declined battle at Munfordsville. Nevertheless, three alternative policies were yet in his election, each of which promised very desirable results. He could have marched rapidly to Louisville, instructing General Smith to effect a junction with him there. The latter would have had less than eighty miles to march, and could have reached Louisville in advance of Bragg. The force then garrisoning the city could have made no effective resistance. The twenty-two thousand reinforcements which Buell subsequently got there—and they were raw levies—had not yet arrived, and the place was practically unfortified. It would have fallen, perhaps, without a struggle into the possession of the first Confederate column which arrived. General Bragg could have drawn rations upon a scale that might have contented even him, and could have hurled his own army and that of Kirby Smith upon Buell when he approached. This plan, successfully carried out, would have accomplished all that a victory at Munfordsville might have given, but it would not have been so certain or easy of execution. Again, General Bragg, after withdrawing from Buell's front, and after the latter had proceeded to Louisville, could have fallen back on Nashville and captured the garrison there very readily, before relief could have reached it, and probably without loss upon his part. General Smith, of course, would have then been compelled also to retire from the State; but he could have

done so at his leisure, and in perfect safety, taking away with him all the stores that he had captured or collected. While this programme would have involved the abandonment of Kentucky, it would have restored the whole of Tennessee to the Confederacy, giving new impetus to enlistments by the Tennesseans, and justly have been regarded as a satisfactory termination of the campaign. Or, in the third place, every effort having been directed to a prompt concentration of all the Confederate forces within his reach, and a resolute use of all available means employed, he might have encountered Buell, even after the latter had united the reinforcements collected at Louisville to his own army, with the probabilities of victory decidedly in his favor.

Perhaps no better expression of the possibilities of the situation can be given, and no juster criticism of the course pursued by General Bragg suggested, than by surmising what General Lee, Albert Johnston, or Stonewall Jackson would have done, had either of those commanders occupied his position at that time.

General Smith, having received no intimation from General Bragg that an immediate concentration of all the forces was necessary or desired, went to work with great energy after his arrival at Lexington to utilize all the resources of the fertile and abundant Bluegrass region, and to encourage enlistments.

In the latter effort he was not so successful as he had hoped to be; and yet, when it is remembered that the coming of the Confederates was entirely unexpected, and that they retreated from Kentucky before their presence had ceased to be matter of novelty and surprise, the fact that some three thousand cavalry were recruited, and perhaps as many infantry, during the brief occupation of the State, may be received as evidence that a longer stay and bolder attitude by the Southern leaders would have brought many thousands more into their ranks.

General Heth, after threatening Cincinnati and inspiring a consternation which induced the temporary detachment to that quarter of a portion of the reinforcements which were being hurried to Buell, fell back to Georgetown, twelve miles from Lexington. As it was important to observe closely and, if they were advancing, make an effort to retard the Federal forces which had pushed out from Cincinnati, upon Heth's withdrawal General Smith ordered me to proceed with that part of General Morgan's command not engaged

in the mountains to the vicinity of Covington. This force, about six hundred strong, was almost incessantly engaged for some days in skirmishing with the Federal column, which seemed during that period to be *en route* for Lexington. It soon discontinued its advance, however, and the shipment of troops from Cincinnati by boats, observed by our scouts watching the river, disclosed beyond all doubt the fact that the enemy was concentrating at Louisville. A demonstration against the infantry, seven or eight thousand strong, which had fallen back to Walton, twenty-five miles from Covington, although it resulted in the capture of some one hundred or more prisoners, convinced me that no further retreat was contemplated by this body or could be induced by any attack upon its front by the force under my command, even if I should hazard it. Near **Augusta**, however, a small town on the Ohio River some fifty miles (by water) above Cincinnati, was a ford passable for cavalry at the then low stage of the stream. If I could succeed in crossing the Ohio at this point a march of thirty miles, easily to be accomplished in a single night, would place my command in the suburbs of Cincinnati, and the dismay occasioned by its presence would have inevitably compelled the return of the troops posted at Walton. A considerable body of the "Home Guards" was collected at **Augusta**, and was in process of regimental organization for service in the Federal army. Numerous arrests of Southern sympathizers had been made by the officer in command of it, and he had completely terrified the people of the vicinage out of all thought of giving "aid and comfort" to the Confederacy. With a view of dispersing this body and then crossing the river for the demonstration on Cincinnati, I proceeded to **Augusta** with some four hundred men. I found when I reached the hills overlooking the little town that two "river gun-boats"—so a couple of small, stern-wheel steamers with a twelve-pound howitzer mounted on each, and their sides protected with hay bales were styled for lack of more fitting designation—lay at the wharf in such position that their guns could rake the streets by which the town must be entered. They were manned, in addition to the regular crew, with perhaps one hundred infantry from the forces stationed at Cincinnati. I was provided with two small guns, and, opening fire on these boats, soon drove them away. I then anticipated no trouble with the "Home Guards," and believed

they would surrender without a fight. Raw troops and citizen soldiery are, however, exceedingly unreliable either in one way or another. These people made a very desperate resistance. They ensconced themselves in the houses and maintained a constant and destructive fire from the windows. In some cases I was compelled to breach the walls of the houses with the small pieces of artillery which I have mentioned. Although the combat lasted not more than fifteen or twenty minutes, my casualties were about twenty per cent of the men engaged, and the number of killed was greater than that of wounded. The town caught fire in several places during the conflict, and the flames raged fiercely; women rushed out upon the streets seeking to aid the wounded and dying. The hand-to-hand fighting in the houses, when entrance into them was forced, was the fiercest and hottest I ever saw. I witnessed in some of them the floors piled with corpses and blood trickling down the stairways.

I have treated this affair at greater length than its importance deserves; but I may be pardoned for the reason that it was rather unusual in its character, and was the only armed collision which occurred during the campaign on the banks of the Ohio.

About the same time, Colonel John Scott was very actively and efficiently engaged in the same sort of service between Frankfort and Louisville; and the freshly recruited cavalry regiments were initiated into active campaign work as soon as they were organized.

Buell reached Louisville on the 26th of September, and found himself immediately involved in one of those complications with his own government which beset and harassed his entire military career. Kentucky had previously been taken from the territory under his command and made into a separate military department, under the name of the Department of the Ohio. General H. G. Wright had been assigned to its command, and Buell found that officer, upon his arrival at Louisville, in immediate command of the troops assembled there, and in departmental control. He was Wright's senior, but in Wright's territory. The question of precedence was referred to Halleck, who instructed Buell on the 27th to exercise command by virtue of his rank, and yet on the 29th his reorganization of the combined armies and active preparation for immediate offensive operations were suspended by an order relieving him from duty, and

directing him to turn over the command to General George H. Thomas, who, however, earnestly protested against the change, and on the next day Buell was reinstated.

After General Bragg had moved from Muncfordsville to Bardstown, the entire Confederate strategic line, including the disposition of the forces under General Smith, may be described as extending from Bardstown on the left flank, via Lexington, to Mt. Sterling on the extreme right. It was one admirably adapted for defense. However threatened, the troops could be marched to the point menaced by interior and excellent roads, and favorable ground for battle was available wherever attack was probable.

The base at Bryantsville was secure, and an exceedingly strong natural position. The aggregate strength of the Confederate armies was little, if any, less than sixty-one thousand men. It is to some extent a matter of conjecture, but I assume that the infantry of General Bragg's army was twenty-nine thousand strong; that of General Smith's army, including Marshall and Stevenson, who reached Lexington on the 17th of September, twenty-three thousand, and, in addition, three thousand recruits from Kentucky, who enlisted in the various regiments to which they could most readily obtain access. According to this estimate the effective infantry strength of the combined armies aggregated fifty-five thousand. The cavalry, including the regiments of recent organization, numbered about six thousand. The grand total, therefore, could not have been much short of the number at which I have placed it, with a correspondent provision of artillery—about one hundred and twenty pieces.

Buell moved out of Louisville October 2d with fifty-eight thousand effective men, of which twenty-two thousand were raw troops. Directing the divisions of Sills and Dumont upon Frankfort, he pushed the main body of his army toward Bardstown. The demonstration upon Frankfort perfectly accomplished its purpose, and induced General Bragg to believe that it was the real attack.

Among other consequences of this feint was the untimely disturbance of the inauguration ceremonies in honor of the provisional Governor of Kentucky, which were in progress at Frankfort when Dumont began to shell the town, but were completed *en route*.

Under the impression that Buell was about to throw his entire army upon Smith, Bragg

ordered Polk to march with the Army of the Mississippi from Bardstown via Bloomfield toward Frankfort, in order that he might strike the enemy in rear, while Kirby Smith should assail him in front. This misconception of the true state of affairs is almost inconceivable; but is not so remarkable as the strange contrast exhibited by the nerve and purpose of this plan and the timidity and vacillation of his conduct immediately afterward.

On the 4th he sent Polk orders from Frankfort, "Concentrate your force in front of Harrodsburg," and, telling him that Smith's army was collected at Frankfort, declared that it was his intention to fight so soon as he could concentrate all the forces.

He remained apparently under the impression that Buell was advancing to attack Smith until the 7th, and on that date issued a battle order at Harrodsburg, which evidently contemplated a general engagement somewhere between Lawrenceburg and Frankfort. But on the evening of the 7th, Gilbert, in command of Buell's center, came in contact with Hardee near Perryville, and compelled him to prepare for action. Hardee called for reinforcements, and Cheatham's division was sent him, while the remainder of Polk's corps continued its march toward Versailles with the view of joining the forces under General Smith for the battle Bragg expected near that place or Lawrenceburg.

It thus happened that General Bragg, completely misled by the mere demonstration upon Frankfort, kept more than two thirds of the entire force under his control, idly maneuvering in a quarter where nothing could possibly be accomplished, and permitted less than twenty thousand men to become engaged upon a field where more than forty-five thousand could have been hurled upon them. Buell's whole army, with the exception of the divisions of Sills and Dumont, together ten or twelve thousand strong, was concentrated at Perryville on the 8th, and but for the unaccountable circumstance that McCook had been fighting several hours before Buell was informed that a battle was in progress, the Confederate line must have been overwhelmed by an attack in force. If such had been the result at Perryville on the 8th, and Buell had then gotten between the scattered remnants of the troops which opposed him there, as he would almost surely have done, he would have been master of the situation, and nothing but disaster could have befallen the Confederates.

For on the 9th Sills and Dumont were marching to rejoin the main body, and in another day Buell could have had his entire fifty-eight thousand—minus the loss sustained in the battle—well in hand.

It is extremely hard to understand why General Bragg—even if temporarily deceived into the belief that Buell was really advancing in force through the rugged and difficult country about Frankfort and Lawrenceburg—could have continued under that singular delusion, after he learned that there was certainly a strong Federal column at Perryville. Common sense, although unaided by military study and experience, ought to have suggested that a prudent and skillful commander, as he knew Buell to be, would, when venturing to divide his forces at such a crisis, employ only detachments in a country unfitted for the prompt and convenient deployment of large bodies of troops, and avail himself of any opportunity to move upon his enemy's flank when he could do so without exposing his own. It is even more remarkable that, willing, indeed desirous, as Bragg seemed, to fight a foe which he believed to be concentrated when he was pressing for battle in the vicinity of Frankfort, he should have been reluctant to fight when he had reason to deem that he should encounter an enemy partially weakened by detachments. When he learned that Buell was at Perryville, he could, with his cavalry alone, have easily prevented Sills and Dumont from debouching from the Benson and Chaplin hills, and by noon of the 8th have massed the infantry of his own army and General Smith's in front of his adversary.

The Confederate loss at Perryville was 3,396; that of the Federals, 4,154.

On the morning of the 9th Bragg withdrew to Harrodsburg, and on the 10th all the Confederate forces were in position there, and, for the first time during the campaign, tactically concentrated. The line of battle was formed south of the little town; and every thing in the attitude of the army—every circumstance by which the soldier not admitted to the councils of war or confidence of his commander could formulate an opinion of what was about to be done—indicated that battle was imminent. On the night of the 11th Buell approached, and his long line was deployed, taking position, as all thought, for combat on the morrow.

The full strength of both armies was present. I have estimated General Bragg's total

effective, it will be remembered, as some three thousand greater than Buell's previously to Perryville, and his loss in that battle had been less than Buell's. Buell had twenty-two thousand raw troops in his ranks; Bragg not more than six thousand of such material. The freshly-enlisted men with Buell were organized into separate and distinct regiments and brigades. Those with Bragg were distributed, for the most part, in veteran regiments and companies. It is well known to every experienced soldier that an intelligent and spirited recruit, if placed in the midst of veterans, will march and fight as well, to all intents, as if trained and instructed; while large bodies of raw men are inefficient. Had battle been joined at Harrodsburg, it would have been the only great field of the war—east or west—on which the Confederate forces were numerically the stronger; and every other conceivable condition was in their favor. Never was the *morale* of an army better than that of General Bragg's on the eve of that anticipated conflict. The men seemed to realize what was at stake, and to fear nothing but retreat, which should carry back war and invasion to their homes and people. They were as eager for combat as on the first day of Shiloh, and their ardor here was supplemented by the stern resolution of veteran soldiery. If there be any thing in the *mathesis* of war—if the rules by which its chances are calculated may ever be safely followed—General Bragg ought to have fought then and there, and must have won. But the gloomy and hostile destiny which seemed to pursue the Confederacy, and become manifest whenever victory was about to visit her banners, interfered. It had stricken the valiant chieftain who led us at Shiloh with death; it smote our commander at Harrodsburg with a consternation which no man in his ardent and undaunted ranks shared then or can understand now.

No one knows, of course, whether or not General Bragg formed at Harrodsburg with the purpose of accepting a decisive engagement. I believe, however, that he did. As I have said, there was every evidence of such an intention upon his part. I remember distinctly a conversation I had with some of General Smith's staff-officers at a late hour on the night before the fatal retreat. They were fully impressed with the belief that we would fight the next day, and quite as strongly with the conviction that we would win a great victory. I knew, of course, that their impression was

derived from General Smith, and, assuming that he certainly was in General Bragg's confidence, I felt not the least doubt that within the next twenty-four hours the mighty game would be decided. Such was the universal opinion in our ranks.

The two hosts lay during that night scarcely three miles apart, each in a great crescent shape, the wings bending toward each other as if feeling through the gloom for the point of first collision, or watching against attack.

Upon our extreme left, where Morgan's cavalry was stationed, a complete view of all that the night permitted to be seen could be had. It was a dark, cloudy night, a drizzling rain descending. Long, glaring lines of camp-fires clustered irregularly and, streaking the black air with a red glow like that of hot iron, marked the positions of the contending armies. The flames, tossed by the night breezes, winked through the rain and darkness like Cyclopean eyes. To the imagination these armies seemed distinctive, sentient individualities, huge monsters of wrath and ferocity, eager to spring so soon as they could see. But when the dawn came, which should have witnessed the Confederate array bearing down in determined and resistless onset, it was seen, instead, sullenly retiring across Dick's River. Buell, with the audacity and alacrity of movement which characterized him during the entire campaign, and which his own people have failed utterly to appreciate, instantly pushed on to Danville, apparently resolved to force Bragg to battle in any event. Then at length, entirely discarding all doubts and consulting only his apprehensions, the Confederate commander began rapid and undisguised retreat, directing his march for Cumberland Gap. This decision elicited remonstrance from some of his officers and bitter murmurs from his troops, but in this he could not be made to waver.

Upon his way out of Kentucky, General Bragg met Breckinridge and the Kentuckians under his command entering the State.

The Army of Tennessee, after a weary and harassing march, reached Murfreesboro; but the army from whose front it had retired in Kentucky was already at Nashville, and more formidable in numbers, discipline, and spirit than before.

For more than two years after this disappointment of its best hope and opportunity, that gallant Army of Tennessee struggled bravely against the constant tide of adversity. But opportunities of such magnitude and prom-

ise, once lost, never return. A victory in Kentucky would have destroyed the only Federal army in the West in which any reliance could be placed at that time, or which, indeed, then existed. It would have placed our armies impregnably on the Ohio with Kentucky firmly in their grasp; it would have cleared the South of invaders and brought a vast host of recruits into the Confederate ranks. The victories won

in Virginia would have become fruitful of results with their moral effect strengthened by triumphs in the West; and the stubborn North, however reluctantly, must have consented to consider thoughts of compromise and peace. Unquestionably there were such possibilities in battle and victory; but with Bragg's retreat the pall fell on the fortunes of the Confederacy.

B. W. Duke.