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The Battle of Wilson's Creek

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In the first portion of this two-part narrative of the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon marched under cover of darkness to make a surprise attack upon the large force of Confederates encamped just 12 miles southwest of Springfield, Missouri. The first contacts with the Confederates the next morning, August 10, 1861, have gone poorly for the Union troops with Colonel Sigel's Brigade completely routed and scattered and Major Plummer's battalion forced to retreat in disorder.

Following Plummer's retreat, there was a partial hiatus in the fighting on "Bloody Hill." The only area where the battle continued was on Lyon's right. There, the 1st Missouri was closely engaged with McBride's and Parsons' divisions of the Missouri State Guard. In the face of the furious Confederate onset, the alignment of Colonel Andrews' regiment was considerably broken.⁸²

In the lull which followed Plummer's defeat, Colonel Robert B. Mitchell of the 2d Kansas became very restless. Up to this time, his regiment had been held in reserve and had done nothing except cover Plummer's retreat. Mitchell, therefore, called for his second in command, Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Blair. The colonel told Blair to hasten to the right, and "ascertain from Lyon, Deitzler, or Sturgis" what his next move should be. Blair was to find out if perhaps the Kansans could be used to a better advantage at some other point on the battlefield.

While crossing the hollow where Cawthorn's deserted camp was located, Blair encountered a number of stragglers from the 1st Missouri making their way toward the rear. When

⁸¹ Sigel, "The Flanking Column at Wilson's Creek," 305.

⁸² *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 66-67, 77.

Blair rode up to Lyon's command post, the general told Blair to have Colonel Mitchell move the regiment to the assistance of the 1st Missouri. Galloping back to within hailing distance of Colonel Mitchell, Blair shouted for the colonel to move the regiment to the right. At a word from Mitchell, the Kansans started toward the front on the double. Crossing the ravine, the regiment rushed to the support of the 1st Missouri. According to Major Sturgis, the Kansans "came up in time to prevent the Missourians from being destroyed by the overwhelming force [McBride's and Parsons' commands] against which they were unflinchingly holding their position."⁸³

Following the repulse of McBride's and Parsons' troops on the right, the guns fell silent on "Bloody Hill." The opposing generals took advantage of this situation to redeploy their commands. Price, upon learning that the timely arrival of the 2d Kansas had kept McBride's division of the State Guard from turning Lyon's right, determined to recall his command. "Old Pap" had decided to abandon his flanking movement in favor of a concentrated smash against the Union center. Any future effort to turn the Yankees' flank would be left to the cavalry. Staff officers were sent to recall McBride.⁸⁴ One of McBride's regiments was sent to the extreme right of Price's battle line; the other was posted on Parsons' left.⁸⁵

By this time, several of the cavalry leaders whose regiments had been routed from their camps by the fire of Sigel's guns had rallied their commands. Colonel Thomas J. Churchill reformed his regiment (the 1st Arkansas Mounted Rifles) north of Skegg's Branch. After dismounting his troopers, Churchill advanced to Price's support. On doing so, the cheering Arkansans moved into position on Slack's left.⁸⁶

The dismounted troopers of the 2d Arkansas Mounted Rifles crossed Wilson Creek following Plummer's retreat. When the regiment went into action on "Bloody Hill," it was stationed on the extreme right of Price's battle line. Colonel Louis Hébert led to Price's assistance about 100 of his Louisi-

⁸³ Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 14; O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 67.

⁸⁴ O. R., Series I, Vol. LIII, 435.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 281; O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 110.

anians who had helped vanquish Plummer in the corn field fight. Joining Slack's command, Hébert deployed his detachment on the southern slope of "Bloody Hill" within about 500 yards of Totten's battery.⁸⁷

General McCulloch, following the rout of Sigel's column, determined to visit "Bloody Hill." When Churchill's dismounted troopers marched up the hill, McCulloch accompanied them. What the general saw convinced him that Price needed every man he could get to insure the defeat of Lyon's command. Returning to the valley, McCulloch encountered Colonel Elkanah Greer. At this time, Greer was eagerly looking for a place to put into action the five companies that had remained with him. When McCulloch saw the colonel, he told Greer to see if he could turn the Federals' right flank. In addition, McCulloch authorized Greer to call upon any other cavalry command, not currently engaged, for assistance in carrying out this assignment.⁸⁸

As Greer started up Skegg's Branch, he encountered Colonel De Rosey Carroll's 1st Arkansas Cavalry. Greer accordingly told Carroll of McCulloch's plans. When this business was taken care of, Carroll's regiment fell in behind Greer's battalion. At Skegg's Springs, the cavalymen turned to the right and started up the ravine which debouched into Skegg's Branch. Near the head of the hollow, Greer halted his column. So far, the Rebels had been able to make a covered approach. Leading his regiment up out of the ravine, Colonel Carroll formed it into line of battle, facing east. (The hill currently held by the Arkansans had been previously occupied by McBride's soldiers and was now held by Guibor's artillerists.) While Colonel Carroll was deploying his regiment, Colonel Greer passed beyond the Arkansans' left flank. Once his battalion had reached a position where it overlapped the Federals' right, Greer halted. He proposed to take from the rear the gunners manning Totten's canister-belching guns.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 111-112, 114; O. R., Series I, Vol. LIII, 423.

⁸⁸ Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 282; O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 118-119, 126. Accompanied by five companies of his South Kansas-Texas Regiment, Greer had crossed to the east side of Wilson Creek shortly before Sigel's gunners had opened fire on Steen's encampment.

⁸⁹ O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 118-119.

His disposition completed, Price ordered the attack to begin. It was about 9 o'clock as the Confederate officers led their cheering troops up the slope for the second time.

In the meantime, Lyon had re-formed his main line of resistance. Steele's battalion, reinforced by Captain Gilbert's detachment, was called up. Steele's battalion of regulars had been covering Du Bois' battery. Reaching the front, Steele's soldiers were posted in support of Totten's guns. Preparations were made by the officers and men of Lyon's command to withstand a desperate onslaught. Already, the Federals could distinctly hear the shouts of the Rebel officers as they regrouped their troops.

Scarcely had Lyon disposed his men to receive the attack before the Confederates appeared in force along his entire front. To make matters worse, the Southerners also threw out strong combat patrols which threatened the flanks of Lyon's battle line. Major Sturgis reported, "The engagement at once became general, and almost inconceivably fierce, along the entire line." Price's Confederates in places were massed in three lines, the front line lying down, the second kneeling, the third standing. The combatants loaded and fired their pieces as rapidly as possible. At times, the battle lines closed to within 30 or 40 yards of each other, as the Rebels surged toward Totten's battery, only to be hurled back by the determined Unionists.

Lyon, to hold his ground, was forced to commit every available man. For more than an hour (from 9 to 10 o'clock), the battle raged with great fury. The contestants were nearly equally matched. At times, the Federals would gain a few yards, only to see their gains erased by a Confederate counterthrust. This process would then be reversed. During this hour, "some of the best blood in the land was being spilled as recklessly as if it were ditch water."⁹⁰

In this phase of the battle, the Union regiment on the left (the 1st Kansas) was particularly hard-pressed by Weightman's command. In a desperate effort to recover the initiative, Colonel Deitzler led a sortie. Followed by Captains Powell Clayton's and Bernard P. Chenoweth's companies and a portion of Captain Peter McFarland's, Deitzler charged the at-

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 67; Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 85.

tacking Missourians. Pressing down the hill, the Kansans rocked the Confederates back on their heels. The Kansans, before being checked, drove the Southerners (on a narrow front) back into the northern edge of their encampment. While leading this charge, Deitzler had his horse shot from under him and was himself severely wounded. Seeing that the Rebels were closing in on his combat patrol from all directions, Deitzler shouted for his men to fall back.⁹¹

Amid the noise and confusion of the constant firing, Captain Clayton failed to hear Deitzler's command to retreat. Instead, Clayton's Company (E) continued to press ahead. Crossing the nose of the ridge, Clayton sighted a body of men whom, from their uniforms, he took to be one of Sigel's regiments. The newcomers' line of march intersected Clayton's. The colonel in charge of the regiment asked Clayton:

. . . where the enemy was. He [Clayton] replied by pointing in the direction of the retreating rebel forces, and immediately commenced aligning his company upon the regiment. All at once . . . [Clayton realized] that he was in a trap, and looking toward the colonel, he recognized in him an old acquaintance, being no less than Col. [James] Clarkson of "Kansas-Border-Ruffian" notoriety, ex-postmaster of Leavenworth.

In an effort to place some distance between his men and the Confederates, Clayton gave the command, "Right oblique, march!" Nothing happened until the Kansans had moved about 30 paces. Suddenly, however, the Rebel adjutant rode rapidly toward Clayton and commanded him to halt. In carrying out this order, Clayton brought his company to an "about face" and confronted Clarkson's regiment. Next, the adjutant demanded, "What troops are these?"

"I belong to the First Kansas Regiment," replied Clayton, who asked in return, "Who are you?"

"I am the adjutant of the 5th Missouri Volunteers," was the reply.

"What Confederate or United States?" asked Clayton.

"Confederate," the adjutant announced.

⁹¹ O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 83; Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 11. Lieutenant Matthew Malone was in command of the portion of Captain Peter McFarland's company which participated in the charge.

"Then dismount, G-d d--n you! you're my prisoner," Clayton said as he drew his pistol.

The Confederate sheepishly handed over his sword in response to Clayton's demand.

"Now," Clayton directed, "order your men not to fire, or you're a dead man." At the same time, the Federals started slowly to retrace their steps. To discourage the Confederates, Clayton forced his prisoner to stand between him and the rest of the Missourians. Collecting his wits, the adjutant shouted for his men to open fire. In response to the adjutant's order, the Rebels started to blaze away. Hardly had the prisoner uttered these words before the aggressive captain shot him. A sergeant in Clayton's company ran the unfortunate man through with his bayonet. Clayton then shouted for his "men to run for their lives," which they did. Reaching the brow of the hill, Clayton re-formed his company.⁹²

Since Colonel Deitzler had been wounded, Major John A. Halderman took charge of the 1st Kansas. To encourage his battered regiment (which had started to recoil in the face of the slashing attack by Cawthorn's, Slack's, and Weightman's Missourians, Hébert's Louisianians, and Embry's Arkansans), Halderman galloped up and down the lines, waving his hat and calling on the soldiers "to remember Kansas and stand by the old flag." In return, the men cheered the major.⁹³

In the meantime, Lyon had learned that the 1st Kansas had started to give way in the face of the sledge hammer-like blows dealt by the Rebels. Lyon accordingly directed the 1st Iowa to march to the Kansans' assistance. At the time that the marching orders reached Lieutenant Colonel William H. Merritt, his regiment was posted on the left of Du Bois' battery. Covered by two companies (D and E), which were deployed as skirmishers, the Iowa battle line swept forward.⁹⁴

Immediately after they had crossed the crest of "Bloody Hill" and started down the southern slope, the Iowans met

⁹² Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 12. There were two 5th Missouri Infantry Regiments—one Union, the other Confederate.

⁹³ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 83; Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 12-13.

⁹⁴ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 67, 81. Colonel John F. Bates of the 1st Iowa, being sick, had not accompanied his regiment when it took the field.

the 1st Kansas "retreating in confusion." The Kansans broke through the right flank of the 1st Iowa's battle line. Companies A and F were separated from the rest of the regiment. Before Colonel Merritt could readjust his lines, his regiment was in contact with the foe. Confronted by a "murderous fire," the colonel shouted for his men to fall back and reform. The din of the firearms and the yelling of the troops, however, drowned out the sound of the colonel's voice. Therefore, only the two right companies (A and F) obeyed Merritt's order. Six companies (B, C, G, H, I, and K) grimly held their ground and blazed away at the advancing Southerners. Expecting the remainder of his regiment to follow, Colonel Merritt had accompanied Companies A and F when they retired across the top of "Bloody Hill."⁹⁵

Private Ware, whose company (E) was deployed as skirmishers, recalled:

On the edge of the meadow . . . was a low rail fence; the Rebels rallied under the shelter of it, and, as if by some inspiration or some immediate change of order, they broke it down in places and started for our artillery [Totten's Battery]. As they got nearer to us, their own artillery ceased firing, because it endangered them. When they got close the firing began on both sides. How long it lasted I do not know; it was probably 20 minutes. Every man was shooting as fast, on our side, as he could load, and yelling as loud as his breath would permit.

Most were on the ground, some on one knee. The foe stopped advancing. We had paper cartridges, and in loading we had to bite off the end, and every man had a big quid of paper in his mouth, from which down his chin ran the dissolved gunpowder. The other side [the Rebels] were yelling, and if any orders were given nobody heard them. Every man assumed the responsibility of doing as much shooting as he could.

Finally, the field was so covered with smoke that not much could be known as to what was going on. The day was clear and hot. As the smoke grew denser, we stood up and kept inching forward, as we fired, and probably went forward in this way 25 yards. We noticed less noise in front of us, and only heard the occasional boom of a gun. The wind, a very light breeze, was in our favor, blowing very gently over us upon the foe.

Our firing lulled, and as the smoke cleared away, sitting

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

on the fence in front of us, on the edge of the meadow was a color-bearer, waving a hostile flag. The firing having ceased, we were ordered back and told to lie down, but the boys would not do it until the Rebel artillery opened on us again.⁹⁶

After repulsing the Rebels, the Iowans fell back a few steps and took a welcomed break. Screened by the 1st Iowa's resolute stand, Major Halderman rallied his regiment on the left of the 2d Kansas.⁹⁷

During this phase of the battle, De Bois' battery supported Lyon's infantry. When Lieutenant Du Bois observed that the Confederates were attacking up the ravine that scarred the south slope of "Bloody Hill," he tried to break up this thrust by cutting his powder charges. In this fashion, a number of projectiles were fired into the target area. The rank growth of underbrush kept Du Bois from observing the effect of this fire. Nevertheless, it seemed to the lieutenant that this bombardment forced the Confederates to shift their axis of advance farther to his left, out of his battery's line of fire.

In an effort to neutralize Du Bois' battery, the Rebel cannoners of Guibor's Battery began to hammer away at the Union gunners with shot and shell. Since they were on a commanding piece of ground to the west of "Bloody Hill," the Rebels were able to deliver a plunging fire. Worse, the projectiles which failed to fall in the area held by Du Bois' battery passed overhead and dropped into the hollow below, where the Federals had established a field hospital. Replying to the Rebels' fire, Du Bois' gunners "succeeded in partially silencing" it.

Throughout the engagement, Du Bois was "embarrassed by . . . [his] ignorance of General Sigel's position." On several occasions, Du Bois allowed Confederate units to form within a few hundred yards of his guns, because he believed that they might be Sigel's troops advancing to form a junction with Lyon's column.⁹⁸

On the extreme right of Lyon's main line of resistance, the infantrymen of the 1st Missouri, supported by Osterhaus'

⁹⁶ Ware, *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri*, 318-320.

⁹⁷ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 81, 83.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

battalion, clung to their position. The slashing attacks of the Confederate regiments were parried by the nearly exhausted Federals. As the firing slackened on the right, Colonel Andrews encountered General Lyon. Andrews asked the general, "Have you seen or heard from our other column?" In answer to this inquiry, Lyon sadly shook his head. Observing that the general was limping, Andrews discovered that he had been wounded in the leg.⁹⁹

During the initial stage of this attack, while General Lyon was walking and leading his horse along the line on the left of Totten's battery, the general's iron-gray horse had been killed. At this time, Lyon was trying to rally the 1st Kansas, which had been thrown into considerable disorder by the furious Rebel onslaught. The shell which killed the general's horse also wounded Lyon in two places, the head and the leg.¹⁰⁰

Captain Francis J. Herron of the 1st Iowa, who was within 20 feet of Lyon when this happened, stated:

. . . he saw the horse fall, and that the animal sank down as if vitally struck, neither plunging nor rearing. Lyon then walked on, waving his sword and hallooing. He was limping for he had been wounded in the leg. He carried his hat, a drab felt, in his hand and looked white and dazed. Suddenly blood appeared on the side of his head and began to run down his cheek. He stood a moment and then walked slowly to the rear.¹⁰¹

When Lyon reached a less exposed position, he sat down. Lyon's head wound. Seeing his adjutant, Major Schofield, Lyon remarked, "I fear the day is lost."

Schofield replied, "O, no, General; let us try once more." In a successful effort to boost the general's morale, Schofield assured him that the troops could be rallied and that the disorder was of a temporary nature. Lyon, apparently convinced by Schofield's arguments that the situation was not so dark as it had first appeared, started on foot for the right.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 61-62; Wherry, "Wilson's Creek and the Death of Lyon," 293.

¹⁰¹ Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 35-36. Captain Herron reported that on the day of the battle Lyon was wearing his old uniform, that of a captain in the regular army.

He was accompanied by one of his aides, who kept urging the general, in vain, to take his horse.¹⁰²

Before going very far, Lyon encountered Major Sturgis. The major dismounted one of his orderlies and tendered his horse to the general. Lyon at first declined to accept the animal, remarking, "I do not need a horse." About this time, part of the 1st Iowa started to give way. Lyon accordingly directed Sturgis to rally the Hawkeyes. When Sturgis rode off to carry out this assignment, a horse was left for the general's use.¹⁰³

As some of the Iowans were being led back into the fray by a staff officer, they called out, "We have no leader. Give us a leader." Lyon immediately asked to be helped onto the orderly's horse. As he straightened himself in the saddle, the blood from his leg wound was dripping off the heel of his boot. General Sweeny now rode up. Lyon, gesturing toward the Iowans, said, "Sweeny, lead those troops forward and we will make one more charge."¹⁰⁴

Lyon, accompanied by Lieutenant William M. Wherry and six or eight orderlies, closely followed the progress of the Iowans' counterthrust. In doing so, the general's party rode on the right of the Hawkeyes. Before Lyon had proceeded very far, Lieutenant Wherry called his attention to a battle line (probably Weightman's brigade) which was drawn up to the left and at right angles to the Iowan's line of attack. A group of horsemen were seen to ride out in front of his line. General Price (who wore a black "plug" hat) and Captain Emmett MacDonald (who had sworn that he would not cut his hair until the Confederacy was acknowledged) were easily recognized. Lyon started as if to confront the Rebel officers, ordering his party to "draw pistols and follow" him. Lieutenant Wherry, however, remonstrated against the general's "exposing himself to the fire of the line, which was partly concealed by the mass of dense underbrush." The staff officer asked if it would not be better if he brought up addi-

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 36; Wherry, "Wilson's Creek and the Death of Lyon," 293; *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 62.

¹⁰³ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 67; Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 36.

¹⁰⁴ Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 36.

tional troops. Lyon agreed, Wherry was directed to bring up the 2d Kansas. Pending the return of his aide, Lyon advanced a few steps and joined two companies of the 1st Iowa (A and F), which had been detailed to hold an exposed sector of the Federal main line of resistance.¹⁰⁵

In the meantime, Colonel Mitchell of the 2d Kansas had sent Colonel Blair to see General Lyon. Blair failed to encounter Wherry as he hastened to the point of danger. When he reached the general's command post, Blair told Lyon that the 2d Kansas was not presently engaged. In addition, Blair asked permission for the regiment to move to the front and occupy the crest of "Bloody Hill." "That is right, sir," Lyon replied, "Order the Second Kansas to the front!"¹⁰⁶

As soon as Blair rejoined the regiment, Mitchell led his cheering Kansans forward. The regiment advanced to the attack in column by platoons. When the head of the column passed Totten's battery, Lyon joined Colonel Mitchell. Swinging his hat, Lyon called out to the Kansas regiment, "Come on, my brave boys," (or, "my bully boys," as some reports indicate), "I will lead you; forward!"¹⁰⁷

After a short advance, the head of the column "raised the crest of the hill beyond the advanced [Totten's] battery." Here, it was ambushed. Among the soldiers cut down by this murderous fire were General Lyon and Colonel Mitchell. A ball penetrated Lyon's left breast, inflicting a mortal wound. Slowly dismounting, Lyon collapsed into the arms of his faithful orderly, Private Ed. Lehmann of Company B, 1st U. S. Cavalry. As he fell, the general exclaimed, "Lehmann, I am killed," and expired.¹⁰⁸

Lieutenant Gustavus Schreyer and two men of his company

¹⁰⁵ Wherry, "Wilson's Creek and the Death of Lyon," 295; Woodruff, *With the Light Guns*, 47.

¹⁰⁶ Wherry, "Wilson's Creek and the Death of Lyon," 295; Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 15.

¹⁰⁷ Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 15; Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 36.

¹⁰⁸ Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 36-37; Wherry, "Wilson's Creek and the Death of Lyon," 925; *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 84. Lyon was the first Union general to be killed in action in the Civil War. The place where Lyon fell was afterwards called "Bloody Point." By the time of the 1883 "Reunion," a pile of stones marked the site of Lyon's death.

of the 2d Kansas carried Lyon's body to the rear. Lehmann, bearing the general's hat and loudly bemoaning the death of his chief, followed. Before Schreyer's party had passed beyond the "line of file-closers," Lieutenant Wherry rode up and took charge of the situation. Apprehensive of the effect upon the troops of the general's death, the staff officer had the face covered. In addition, he ordered Lehmann, who was crying like a child, to "stop his noise." Wherry also tried in other ways to suppress the news that the general had been killed. In a sheltered spot near Du Bois' battery, the body was placed in the shade of a small blackjack. The general's features were covered with half of a soldier's blanket, and the limbs composed.

Surgeon Cornyn was summoned and asked to examine the body of the general. Closely scrutinizing the corpse, the surgeon wiped the blood from the side of the face. Next, he opened the vest and split the general's shirt, which was soaked with blood. Looking at the wound, Cornyn discovered it was in the heart. The aorta had been pierced. As soon as Cornyn had completed his examination, Wherry went to look for Schofield.¹⁰⁹

The fierce blast of musketry that had struck down Lyon and Mitchell caused the lead company of the 2d Kansas (K) to recoil. In an instant, however, the soldiers recovered from their shock. Surging forward, the column deployed into line of battle to the left. At the end of 15 to 20 minutes' desperate combat, the Kansans drove the Missourians down the slope and into the brush beyond. Colonel Weightman was mortally wounded in this fighting. Having forced the Southerners to fall back, Colonel Blair re-formed his regiment on the brow of "Bloody Hill." Here, the Kansans were exposed to a harrassing fire from the Rebel artillery. Fortunately for the Federals, the Confederate gunners were putting too much elevation on their pieces; the projectiles ripped through the trees overhead.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 97; Wherry, "Wilson's Creek and the Death of Lyon," 295-296.

¹¹⁰ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 84; Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 16. At this time, the 2d Kansas was short two companies. Company I was serving as mounted infantry; Company B had been deployed as skirmishers and sent to watch the area on Osterhaus' right.

Blair, who had assumed command of the regiment when Mitchell was wounded, now received a message from the colonel. Hastening to the field hospital, which was in the ravine north of "Bloody Hill," Blair saw the badly wounded Mitchell. The colonel told Blair "that he must take command, and fight the regiment to the best of his ability."

Blair answered, "I will try not to disgrace you or the State."¹¹¹

About the time that Price's frontal assault waned, Colonel Greer's Texans moved to the attack. Screened by Colonel Carroll's Arkansans, Greer formed his five companies beyond the Yankees' right flank. When Greer gave the word, his troopers, letting go with a mighty "shout for Texas," thundered forward. This sudden onset caused the Union patrols operating in this sector to fall back. Some of the Federals fled without firing their guns, others held their ground until nearly ridden down by the Texans, then fired and fled. The men of Company B, 2d Kansas which had been assigned to watch the extreme right of the Northern battle line scrambled for cover in the brush and fired at Greer's troopers as they galloped past.¹¹²

When Captains Du Bois and Totten saw the Rebel cavalry charging toward their guns, they shouted for their gunners to shift their pieces. All of Du Bois' and several of Totten's guns were quickly wheeled to the right. The gunners commenced to hammer away at the oncoming Texas cavalymen with shot and shell. Simultaneously, Colonel Merritt ordered the two companies (A and F) which had rallied on Totten's guns to "about face." These sturdy infantrymen also started to blaze away at the Texans.¹¹³

Greer's attack, which had started off so gloriously, quickly collapsed when the Union artillery roared into action. Captain Totten made some caustic comments concerning the Rebel cavalry in his "After Action Report." The captain wrote:

. . . the enemy tried to overwhelm us by an attack of some 800 cavalry, which, unobserved, had formed

¹¹¹ Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 16.

¹¹² O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 85, 119.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 74, 80-81.

below the crest of the hills to our right and rear. Fortunately some of our infantry companies and a few pieces of artillery from my battery [also Du Bois'] were in position to meet this demonstration, and drove off their cavalry with ease. This was the only demonstration made by their cavalry, and it was so *effete* and ineffectual in its force and character as to deserve only the appellation of child's play. Their cavalry is utterly worthless on the battle-field.¹¹⁴

Private Ware of the 1st Iowa witnessed the repulse of Greer's attack. The Iowa infantryman recalled:

About this time we heard yelling in the rear, and we saw a crowd of cavalry coming at a grand gallop, very disorderly, with their apex pointing steadily at . . . [Totten's guns]. We advanced down the hill toward them [Greer's troopers] about 40 yards to where our view was better, and rallied in round squads of 15 or 20 men as we had been drilled to do, to repel a cavalry charge. We kept firing, and awaited their approach with fixed bayonets.

In the meantime, over our heads our artillery [Totten's and Du Bois' batteries] took up the fight; then the cavalry scattered through the woods, leaving the wounded horses and men strewn around. We captured several dismounted men by ordering them in under cover of a gun. A flag was seen lying on the ground about 150 yards in front of us, but no one was ordered or cared to undertake to go and bring it in. In a few minutes a solitary horseman was seen coming toward us, as if to surrender, and the cry therefore rose from us, "Don't shoot!" When within about 20 yards of that flag the horseman spurred his horse, and, leaping from his saddle, picked the flag from the grass, and off he went with it a-flying. The flag bore the "Lone Star" of Texas, and we didn't shoot at the horseman because we liked his nerve.¹¹⁵

Following their repulse, the Texans fell back and rendezvoused with Colonel Carroll's Arkansans. Greer's abortive attack, however, was not a complete failure, because it enabled Price to disengage his hard-pressed troops. In the face of the slashing counterattack launched by the 1st Iowa and the 2d Kansas, the Rebels were having a difficult time. Once his men had fallen back, the aggressive Price regrouped them

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 74, 119.

¹¹⁵ Ware, *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri*, 322-323.

preparatory to mounting another assault on the Union main line of resistance.¹¹⁶

* * *

When Lieutenant Wherry encountered Major Schofield, the major had just returned from leading a successful sortie by a combat patrol from the 1st Iowa. Upon being told of Lyon's death, Schofield announced that Major Sturgis should take command. En route to tell Sturgis of his elevation in command, Schofield stopped to view Lyon's body.¹¹⁷

The general had been dead about one-half hour when Schofield finally contacted Sturgis. By this time, the Rebels had fallen back and an uneasy quiet had fallen on the battlefield. When informed that the command of the army had devolved upon him, Sturgis was fully aware of the grave responsibilities that rested upon his shoulders. At this time, Sturgis reported, "Our brave little army was scattered and broken." To make matters worse, a yet undefeated Confederate force (which Sturgis erroneously estimated to number 20,000 strong) was massed to his front. Most of the Union troops had been unable to refill their canteens since leaving Springfield 16 hours before. Furthermore, many of the unit commanders reported that their men were running short of ammunition. If the Confederates discovered this, the Army of the West would be faced with "total annihilation."

The great question in Sturgis' mind was, "Where is Sigel?" Sturgis felt that if Sigel's column arrived on the field and launched a vigorous assault on the Rebel's right flank and rear, then his command "could go forward with some hope of success." If Sigel had been whipped (which he had), there was nothing left for Sturgis to do but retreat.¹¹⁸

Confronted by "this perplexing condition of affairs," Sturgis called a council of war. This meeting was attended by the principal officers, who were still able to take the field. All agreed that unless Sigel appeared very soon, there was nothing left but to retreat, if indeed retreat were possible.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 282.

¹¹⁷ O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 62-67; Wherry, "Wilson's Creek and the Death of Lyon," 296.

¹¹⁸ O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 67-68.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 68; Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 38.

The "consultation" was abruptly terminated when the officers sighted "a heavy column of infantry" moving down off the hill on the opposite side of Wilson Creek. Since the advancing troops came from the direction where Sigel's guns had been heard at the beginning of the struggle, the Union officers' spirits soared. A staff officer, who had been posted in front of where the meeting was going on, galloped up and called out delightedly, "Yonder comes Sigel! Yonder comes Sigel!" Sturgis, supposing that the newcomers were friends, told his officers to form their men for an advance. The staff meeting then adjourned; the officers hastened to rejoin their commands.¹²⁰

Sturgis trained his field glasses on the approaching troops. On doing so, he observed that they "wore a dress much resembling that of Sigel's brigade, and carried the American flag." The major watched in fascination as the soldiers forded Wilson Creek and deployed into line of battle near the foot of "Bloody Hill."

Convinced that these soldiers were friends, Lieutenant Du Bois cautioned his gunners to hold their fire. This column was permitted to cross the ground covered by Du Bois' battery without being challenged. About the time that the newcomers (John R. Gratiot's Arkansans) reached the defiladed area at the bottom of the hill, Sturgis' skirmishers raised the cry, "They are Rebels". Seconds later, a battery (Guibor's) which had fallen in behind the column was wheeled about. Quickly unlimbering their four guns, the Rebel artillerists were pounding the Federals with shell and canister almost before the trails hit the ground. The infantry, which had taken position at the foot of "Bloody Hill," now opened fire and slowly started to ascend the slope. Sturgis characterized this, the final phase of the battle, as "the fiercest and most bloody engagement of the day."¹²¹

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.* Not only the officers, but also the enlisted men, subscribed to the belief that if Sigel arrived the day would be saved. The soldiers of the 2d Kansas also sighted a flag which they thought was the "stars and stripes" on the hillside to their left. Satisfied that Sigel was coming, Colonel Blair formed and dressed his lines. Three cheers were then given for "the victory deemed already won." Captain Russell rushed from his place in the line to where Blair was sitting on his horse. The

During the lull which preceded this storm, the Union brass had made several changes in their dispositions. Major Osterhaus' battalion was shifted from right to left and posted in support of Du Bois' battery. Here, Osterhaus' troops were joined by the reorganized fragments of the battered 1st Missouri. Colonel Andrews of the 1st Missouri (who had been wounded earlier) had been sent to the rear by Surgeon Cornyn; Captain Theodore Yates now led the sadly reduced regiment. These units were charged with the mission of guarding the Union left.¹²²

The 2d Kansas, reinforced by four companies of the 1st Kansas, held the Union right. Three companies of the 1st Kansas (B, F, and I) were posted on the right of Blair's regiment; Captain Clayton's Company (E) was stationed on the left. In addition, the 2d Kansas had been bolstered by the return of Company B, which had been on detached service. On the right of the 2d Kansas was a ravine. During the ensuing engagement, the Confederates used this gully as a covered avenue of approach.¹²³

Totten's battery, supported by the 1st Iowa and Steele's regulars, defended the center of Sturgis' reorganized main line of resistance. Totten's guns were in front and to the right of the left wing of the 1st Iowa.¹²⁴ Steele's regulars were posted in front and to the left of Totten's battery. One company, Lothrop's, was deployed as skirmishers and occupied the crest of the ridge to Steele's left and front.¹²⁵ Three companies of the 1st Kansas held the brow of the hill on the right of Totten's battery. Another three-company detachment from the 1st Kansas watched the gap in the Union line between the 2d Kansas and Steele's battalion.¹²⁶

captain grimly announced, "I tell you, Colonel, it's Manassas again." The words were scarcely out of the captain's mouth before the fiercest fire of the day opened upon our lines from beneath the 'dear old flag,' and the battle was renewed with greater firing than ever." Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 17.

¹²² O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 68, 77.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 84; Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 16.

¹²⁴ O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 68, 74.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

Despite Lieutenant Wherry's precautions, news of Lyon's death was soon common knowledge. Private Ware recalled that during the lull:

A big regular army cavalry officer on a magnificent horse rode down alongside of the rear of our company (E), and along the line. He appeared to have been sent for the purpose of bracing us up. He shouted and swore in a manner that was attractive even on the battlefield, and wound up with a big oath and the expression, "Life ain't long enough for them to lick us in."¹²⁷

It was a little after 10 o'clock when Price's attacking troops broke contact with Sturgis' battle line and fell back to regroup. Except for several organizations which were pulled out of the line, the Confederate order of battle remained essentially unchanged.

When Colonel Hébert and his detachment of the 3d Louisiana fell back, the colonel was instructed by General McCulloch to regroup his scattered command. Once he had rendezvoused with Lieutenant Colonel Samuel M. Hyams' and Major William F. Tunnard's wings (which had spearheaded the attack which had resulted in the rout of Sigel's column), Hébert re-formed his regiment. Orders were now received by the colonel, directing him to turn the Federals' right and take Totten's battery from the rear. It required a hard, difficult march on the part of Hébert's regiment to pass beyond the Yankees' right flank. Consequently, the tactical situation had changed drastically by the time the Louisianians gained the position from where Hébert planned to launch his smashing attack.¹²⁸

Up until this time (10 a.m.), the three Arkansas infantry regiments belonging to General Pearce's command had not fired a shot. Following the defeat of Sigel's column, there was no reason for the Confederate leaders to continue to hold Pearce's combat-ready infantry in reserve. A little after 10 o'clock, Colonel McIntosh rode up to Pearce's command post and informed him that the Federals were exerting great pressure on Price's left flank. Pearce was urged to march to Price's assistance. Placing himself at the head of Colonel

¹²⁷ Ware, *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri*, 324-325.

¹²⁸ *O. R.*, Series, I, Vol. III, 114.

Gratiot's 3d Arkansas, Pearce led the regiment to Price's support. Colonel McIntosh followed with the 5th Arkansas.

Price volunteered to guide the Arkansans to the ground they were destined to occupy. Throughout most of their approach march, Gratiot's soldiers were within range of the Yankees' artillery. The Federals, however, being uncertain of the Arkansans' identity, held their fire. As Price led the regiment up the southwestern slope of "Bloody Hill," he announced to the soldiers, "You will soon be in a pretty hot place . . . but I will be near you, and I will take care of you; keep as cool as the inside of a cucumber and give them thunder." Turning to Gratiot, who had served under him in the Mexican War, Price remarked, "That's your position colonel; take it and hold it whatever you do. I will see that you are not too hard-pressed. Don't yield an inch."¹²⁹

The Union skirmishers now opened fire on the head of the column. Gratiot deployed his men into line of battle. When this business was taken care of, the advance was resumed. About 50 paces had been covered when the Arkansans were suddenly assailed by a strong force of Federals (the 2d Kansas) in front and on the left flank. Shortly thereafter, several Union guns (Sokalski's section) roared into action. Playing upon the Arkansans' left flank, the Yankee cannoniers enfiladed Gratiot's regiment with shell and canister. To escape annihilation, the Arkansans lay down. Gratiot's soldiers, from the prone position, returned the Northerners' fire. For at least one-half hour, this deadly contest between the 3d Arkansas and the 2d Kansas continued. To make matters worse, Gratiot's men were also fired on by some unidentified Confederate soldiers who were posted behind them and lower down the hill.¹³⁰

Immediately after the 3d Arkansas had gone into action, Colonel McIntosh brought up the 5th Arkansas and Reid's battery. McIntosh put the seven companies of the 5th Arkansas into line on the right of Gratiot's soldiers.¹³¹

When Price's tired Missourians and Churchill's dismounted

¹²⁹ Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 283-284.

¹³⁰ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 123.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 121; Pearce, "Arkansas Troops in the Battle of Wilson's Creek," 302.

troopers move to the attack, they began to cheer lustily. Urged on by their leaders, they started up "Bloody Hill." Within a few minutes, the fighting had again flared up along the entire front, which was not more than 1,000 yards in length. Already the Missouri State Guard had failed in two attempts to drive the Yankees from the hill. But this time they felt confident; they had been heavily reinforced.¹³²

On the Union left, Du Bois' battery (supported by Osterhaus' battalion and the rallied portions of the 1st Missouri) held firm. Du Bois' gunners engaged Guibor's battery in a deadly duel. When the Southerners found their ammunition running short, they were forced to cease firing. Captain Reid's Fort Smith Battery moved into position on Guibor's left. Once they had unlimbered their pieces, the Arkansans began to shell the Union main line of resistance. After Captain Reid's gunners had been in action about five minutes, Colonel McIntosh told them to cease firing.¹³³

Having disposed of the Rebel artillery, Du Bois' battery and its supporting contingents concentrated on the right wing of Price's attacking battle line. After a sharp contest, the Confederate infantry was repulsed.¹³⁴

The Union center, (held by Totten's battery, the 1st Iowa, and Steele's command) was the focus of the Rebel onslaught. The company of skirmishers led by Lieutenant Warren L. Lothrop (which Steele had thrown forward on the left) was driven in by the Missourians as they surged up the hill. Following their initial success, the Southerners moved against Steele's command and Totten's battery. A gun (probably one of Guibor's) which the Rebels had emplaced below the crest of the hill to Steele's left and front supported the attack. The cannoneers used both shell and canister, with what Steele described as "more moral effect than danger to us." Within several minutes, the Rebels increased the strength of their battery. Steele reported that they "threw an incessant shower of missiles at us; but my men were ordered to stoop, and very few took effect upon us."¹³⁵

Mistakenly believing that they had softened up the Union

¹³² Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 285-286.

¹³³ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 68, 120; *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. LIII, 432.

¹³⁴ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 68.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

center, the Rebel brass sent a strong column charging at Totten's four guns. The Missourians closed to within 20 feet of the muzzles of Totten's pieces and received their charges of canister full in their faces. The clouds of smoke arising from the opposing battle lines commingled and seemed as one.¹³⁶

During this deadly struggle, the left wing of the 1st Iowa was called up and took position at the guns. In response to a plea from Colonel Blair for assistance, Totten had sent Sokalski's section to the Kansans' support.¹³⁷

Prior to this onslaught, Colonel Blair had been worried about the ravine which bounded his position on the right. This gully led toward the Rebel line, and gave the foe a covered approach to his regiment's position. Several scouts were sent to reconnoiter this ravine. When they failed to return, the colonel decided to investigate. Before Blair had proceeded 20 yards beyond his lines, he was fired on and his horse killed. Unhurt, the colonel scrambled back to his lines and secured another horse.¹³⁸

Immediately thereafter, Lieutenant Sokalski's section was seen approaching. In the meantime, Captain Chenoweth of the 1st Kansas had reconnoitered the ravine. The captain sighted a strong force of Rebels (Gratiot's regiment) coming up the hollow. Calling to Sokalski, Chenoweth indicated where he wanted the guns emplaced. Assisted by Major William F. Cloud and Captain Bernard P. Chenoweth, Sokalski's gunners quickly unlimbered their two guns and began to blast the attacking Arkansans with canister. To protect his men from the Rebels' galling volleys, Blair ordered them to "lie down and load and fire in that position." Blair proudly recalled, "The fire upon us was terrific, but not a man under my command broke ranks or left his place."¹³⁹

For the first time since the beginning of the battle, the Federal line never wavered. After the Rebel attack on the Union left had been repulsed, Lieutenant Du Bois limbered up a section to rush to Totten's support. Before Du Bois' gunners were able to clear a path through the wounded, the lieutenant

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 68; Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 38-39.

¹³⁷ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 74.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

received orders to fall back to the hill north of the field hospital.¹⁴⁰

After about 30 minutes of close and deadly combat, the Rebels fell back to regroup. Just before the Southerners pulled back, Sturgis received a disturbing message from Colonel Blair. The Kansan reported that his men had nearly exhausted their supply of ammunition. Confronted by this grave turn of events, Sturgis issued orders for the Army of the West to retire. It was about 11:30 a.m. when Sturgis made this decision. The Confederate withdrawal, the major knew, would facilitate his efforts to disengage his command. Captain Gordon Granger and several others opposed Sturgis' decision to retire. They urged that the army fall back a short distance, regroup, and wait for news concerning the fate of Sigel's column. Sturgis reserved judgment, for the time being, on Granger's proposition.¹⁴¹

Once Du Bois' battery, supported by Osterhaus' battalion, had taken position on the designated ridge, the army started to pull back off "Bloody Hill."¹⁴² When Colonel Blair received the order to retire, he announced that he "was humiliated beyond expression for . . . [he] felt that the battle might have been ours . . ."¹⁴³ In spite of his personal feelings, Blair proceeded to carry out Sturgis' instructions. Blair reported that his Kansans left the hill "in good order and slow time, with the men as perfectly dressed as on the drill ground." After crossing the hollow, Blair re-formed his troops alongside Du Bois' guns.¹⁴⁴

Totten's battery, as soon as the disabled horses could be replaced, retired along with the 1st Iowa and the 1st Kansas. Steele's reinforced battalion covered the army's retirement. Before Steele's troops were able to evacuate "Bloody Hill," the captain saw a strong force of Rebels advancing rapidly to the attack. Captain Granger had just joined Steele. Without a moment's hesitation, Granger rushed to the rear and brought

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 63, 69; Wherry, "Wilson's Creek and the Death of Lyon," 297.

¹⁴² *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 80.

¹⁴³ Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 16.

¹⁴⁴ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 85.

up a hodge-podge of units (several companies of the 1st Missouri, three companies of the 1st Kansas, and two companies of the 1st Iowa), which had been supporting Du Bois' battery. Moving up on the double, Granger led these soldiers into action on Steele's left. Falling upon the right flank of the Rebel column, Granger's troops "poured into it a murderous volley, killing or wounding nearly every man within 60 or 70 yards." This caused the Southerners to recoil and discouraged any further thoughts of pursuit by these soldiers.¹⁴⁵

After seeing that the wounded had been loaded into ambulances, Steele's command left "Bloody Hill." Du Bois' cannoners covered Steele's soldiers as they fell back across the hollow. The guns were kept in battery until the last of the soldiers had passed, in what Du Bois described as "good order." When the battery limbered up their pieces and started to follow, the 12-pounder gun broke down. At Du Bois' request, Osterhaus' battalion remained with the battery until repairs had been effected.¹⁴⁶

Following Steele's withdrawal, Sturgis' army marched unmolested and in tolerable order to the "high open prairie" west of Ross' Spring, which was about two miles from the battlefield. Here, Sturgis called a halt. The soldiers were permitted to refill their canteens and eat. Private Ware recalled that the men of the 1st Iowa ate part of their "big crusts." What was left over, the soldiers again slung over their shoulders.¹⁴⁷ Several wagons also arrived from Springfield loaded with bread. This bread was "devoured with a relish which extreme hunger alone can give."¹⁴⁸

As soon as the soldiers had rested, Sturgis ordered the march renewed. At this time, the major "was undecided

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 68, 79.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 68; Ware, *The Lyon Campaign in Missouri*, 325. In some sources, the spring near where the army halted is spelled, "Rose." During the retreat, it was discovered that in order to insure the evacuation of the wounded, the body of General Lyon had been taken from the wagon in which it had been placed and left at the field hospital. Lieutenant Charles W. Canfield, with his command (Company D, 1st U. S. Cavalry), was sent with a wagon to recover the general's body. The lieutenant's party started for the battlefield. Before reaching the area, they found that the Confederates were in possession of the field and were busy gathering up their dead and wounded. In doing so, the Southerners had removed Lyon's body. Wherry, "Wilson's Creek and the Death of Lyon," 297.

whether the retreat should be continued, or whether we should occupy the more favorable position in our rear, and await tidings of Sigel." This problem was quickly solved. One of Sigel's non-commissioned officers (Sergeant Frælich) rode up on a foam-covered horse. The sergeant reported that Sigel's column "had been totally routed and all his artillery captured, Colonel Sigel himself being either killed or made prisoner." Since most of his soldiers had fired away all their ammunition and all they could rifle from the cartridge-boxes of the dead and wounded, Sturgis now had no other option but to return to Springfield.¹⁴⁹

The Army of the West re-entered Springfield at 5 p.m. Sturgis now learned that Sigel had escaped and reached the town one-half hour before him. All told, the Army of the West had been away from the city 23 hours.¹⁵⁰

So suddenly had the battle ended that many of the Confederates were uncertain as to how the engagement had gone. Another attack by the bluecoats was expected and prepared for. Gradually, however, the Confederate skirmishers worked their way forward and occupied the ground where Totten's battery had stood. Continuing their advance, the Rebels crossed the crest of "Bloody Hill." On the opposite ridge could be seen the Union rear guard—Du Bois' battery and Osterhaus' battalion.¹⁵¹

This news caused a cry to ring along the front that the Federals were retreating. It made little difference to the badly battered Confederates that the foe had escaped. Springing to their feet, the Southerners gave vent "to their unspeakable relief and to their unbounded joy with that exultant cry which is never heard except upon a battlefield where on the victors stand." This shout reached Colonel Weightman's ears. At this time, Weightman lay in the Confederate field hospital at the Ray house. "What is it?" the colonel inquired.

"We have whipped them. They are gone," one of his men replied.

¹⁴⁸ Burke, *Military History of Kansas Regiments*, 4.

¹⁴⁹ Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 40; *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 69.

¹⁵⁰ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. III, 69; Sigel, "The Flanking Column at Wilson's Creek," 306.

¹⁵¹ Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 59.

"Thank God!" Weightman whispered.

In another instant he was dead.¹⁵²

In the meantime, Hébert's Louisianians had reached the head of the ravine in which Cawthorn's deserted camp was located. At this time, the Union rear guard was withdrawing sullenly across the hollow. Hébert hesitated to attack when he learned that there was an unidentified force on his rear. About 20 minutes elapsed before Hébert learned that these troops were friendly. He then moved forward. Reinforced by a detachment of Missourians led by Captain Johnson, the Louisianians swept to the attack. After a brisk skirmish, Steele's troops broke contact with Hébert's command. Hébert made no effort to press the pursuit. Recalling his troops, the colonel mustered and re-formed his command on "Bloody Hill."¹⁵³

In the heavy fighting that had preceded the Union retreat, General Price had been wounded. Several times during the fighting, bullets had pierced the general's clothes. Finally, one of the projectiles inflicted a painful wound in Price's side. Turning with a smile to a nearby aide, Price said, "That isn't fair; if I were as slim as Lyon that fellow would have missed me entirely." Except for this officer, no one else knew until after the battle was over that the general had been wounded.¹⁵⁴

Shortly after the Confederate skirmishers had occupied the top of "Bloody Hill," Generals McCulloch and Pearce, accompanied by several staff officers, met on the crest. At this time, the Pulaski Battery was engaged in a sporadic duel with Du Bois' battery, which was covering Sturgis' retreat. General Pearce recalled that the Confederate officers "watched the retreating army through . . . [their] field-glasses, and were glad to see him go."¹⁵⁵

The Southerners made no effort to pursue Sturgis' column. Several reasons were given by the Rebel brass for this failure. Like the Federals, the Confederates were plagued by an ammunition shortage. After the battle had ended, the

¹⁵² Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 289.

¹⁵³ O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 114.

¹⁵⁴ Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 286.

¹⁵⁵ Pearce, "Arkansas Troops in the Battle of Wilson's Creek," 303.

camp followers (to whose presence with the army McCulloch had strongly objected) had robbed the dead and wounded of their arms and ammunition. This prevented the ordnance department from making an equitable redistribution of these items. In addition, McCulloch feared to risk a pursuit with his undisciplined command. Furthermore, rumors were prevalent that strong reinforcements were marching to the Unionists' assistance.¹⁵⁶

It is certain, however, that Price wished McCulloch to pursue, but the latter would not. Price then resumed command of the Missouri State Guard, and then he would not pursue, for motives of his own.¹⁵⁷

Probably the real reason that the Confederates did not follow the Yankees was that they had suffered such grievous losses themselves. The attrition among the ranking officers of the Missouri State Guard was terrific. Lieutenant Colonel George W. Allen of Price's staff was killed while delivering an order; Weightman was borne to the rear, dying; Cawthorn and his adjutant were both mortally wounded; Slack had been fearfully lacerated by a musket ball; Clarkson was shot in the leg. Three regimental commanders had been incapacitated by their wounds. Colonel Ben Brown, the president of the Missouri senate was dead.¹⁵⁸

In the battle of Wilson's Creek, the Federals lost 1,317 officers and men out of 5,400 engaged. Of these casualties, 258 were killed, 873 wounded, and 186 missing. Out of the approximate 800 effectives engaged, the 1st Iowa had 12 killed, 138 wounded, and 4 missing. There were about 10,200 Confederates engaged in the battle. The Rebels reported 1,230 casualties—279 dead and 951 wounded. The Federals lost 24% of their personnel engaged; the Rebels 12%.

Besides the five guns (three 12-pounders and two brass 6-pounders), the Rebels captured several hundred stand of small arms and a "quantity" of ammunition. The colors of the 3d Missouri also fell into the hands of the victors.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 746.

¹⁵⁷ Holcombe and Adams, *Battle of Wilson's Creek*, 59.

¹⁵⁸ Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 287.

¹⁵⁹ O. R., Series I, Vol. III, 100, 106.



BRIGADIER GENERAL NATHANIEL LYON
Commander of the Union forces
at the Battle of Wilson's Creek



LIEUTENANT COLONEL WILLIAM H. MERRITT
1st Iowa Infantry



ORA WILLIAMS
Editor of the *Annals of Iowa* 1938-46



JAMES S. "RET" CLARKSON
Editor of the *Iowa State Register*

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