

Falmouth, VA

23 October, 1862

Dare'est Caw'sun Stanley, Thar is a chill in the ayer and the frost on the field. The lads and I have been erect'n our winter quarters with great haste. I trust that your row with the sawbones a month prior has resulted in your fortunate mend'n? Uncle Sumner fled the sarjun's blade decide'n to self medicate with a drop o' the pure. A wiser man in the ways of alchemy I challenge ye to find.

Stephan returned to the regiment and great peril followed him. The Army was on the move look'n for Oulde "Stonewall" agin. We had pursued the Foe into a beautiful valley, but, as usual He had us beat'n by a good day's march and like a wolf hound in a Tipperrary pub found ourselves sniff'n the blaggards' rear. The Regt had established itself within a small farmstead along a creek. Refugees infarmed us that the Johnnies had since passed in great farce no more than a fortnight prior. The valley narrowed between 2 ridges with plenty of cover for the bloody Saxons. I mean Graybacks, to take careful mark on us as we advanced. "Lt Stosh", aye, the "bonny brass" of the family, set to wark organizing pickets for outpost duty. Caw'sun's ire was raised when it was discovered Cpl Carl Goeser & Pvt Sanity Lack'n Jeffrey were off cavort'n with the refugees. Stosh assigned the 2 lads their own guard post consist'n of 2 stumps situated in prominent observance of the Co street. They were then ardered to lament for their acts of treachery by apologize'n to all the boy'os that should happen by. After do'n the penance, all was forgiven, and "Cpl Stumpy" & "Stumpy Jeff" were acquitted of any further retribution. Spake'n of refugees, oulde Basil had the great far'chun of discover'n the fairest Miss Millie O'Toole of the crimson locks was among the homeless wanderers. It seems quite odd that these refugees keep locate'n to the vicinity of our march, almost as if they know where we're go'n.. quite peculiar. Many of us lads, after give'n proper tribute to our Dear Lt were allowed to join the refugees for some harmless merriment. Stephan plucked the banjo & oulde Basil punished the bodhran croon'n the ayers taught to us back in our youthful days on the Isle. In lacking your voice our tone was need'n, so we captured a wee squittel, tied its tail to it's left leg, put it in a barrel, and kicked it every now and then to replicate your melodious offer'ns.

We were quite thankful to Miss Bonnie, Miss Esther, Miss Millie, & Miss Theresa for look'n after us with such great devotion. Perhaps Stephan isn't tell'n, but, oulde Basil is tink'n he's been in this valley before - there were several young refugee children that took an instant shine - or perhaps were drawn to the shine, of caw'sun and it was like pull'n nits to remove them from our camp. They were a knowledgeable group of garsons explain'n to us the difference between Union and Rebel accessories. One of the imps kept doubt'n me Hibernian heritage so I tied his right arm to his left leg, put him in a barrel - already occupied by an incarcerated rodent, and kicked it every now and then.. However, let it be known, NO children or animals were harmed as a result of this blarney tale..

The night passed and the arctic marn'n cooled the revelry remind'n us that there would most certainly be the Devil to pay before the next sun set. After the roll, Lt Stosh called Stephan, Dash'n Jeffrey and Oulde Basil St Arthur aside to discuss with us the need for an advanced scout'n of a ridge trail discovered the previous day. We were to negotiate the trail, discover any enemy outposts, sketch any Rebel fortifications, and report back unseen. The tre of us ascended the timbered slope and did indeed find the path. We took intervals and proceded cautiously for the Johnnies could have been anywhere. We found a clare'n in the wilderness that revealed a handsome farmstead below. It was hare that we observed a light garrison of Rebel infantry loll'n about the outbuild'ns and fratranize'n with the civies. Caw'sun sketched what he could and we dared try the luck of Oulde Erin and pressed on. Twas fortunate we did for we discovered they had a field piece monitor'n the farm lane our lads most certainly would be using. By further good 'cess we were party to their roll call and counted the namesakes of 18 black souls of the traitorous persuasion. Now we decided to up the ante yet again and continued wark'n the trail to discover what lay beyond the farmstead. We passed under an arch of a bowed limb when we ayred spake'n yonder up the trail. It was soon evident that they were Johnnies from their sloppy dialects and the offensive stench that surroun'd em.

The tre of us began a careful redeployment back the way we had just traversed. Our guests must ave been hunt'n for there were no signs of urgency in their candor. Caw'sun ardered us to set up a tre lad skare'mish line and we edged our way back toward the unsuspect'n nancy's. I looked around a bend in the trail and was rewarded for my trouble with some buckshot over me shoulder. I continued me withdrawl and caw'sun Stephan and Dash'n Jeffrey were wait'n to offer any furter attempts on me life with a response in kind. Stephan gave me his sketches and hod me run them down the ridge to make a report of the farmstead and of our contact'n the Johnnies. I half tumbled, partially stumbled, and fully rambled down the be-timbered embankment to head quarters where Lt Stosh ayger'ly awaited and he showed me into the Col's parlor without delay. Me breath was still up on the trail so whence it caught up to me I was able to relate the information gained on the enemy garrison to our front and the need to relieve caw'sun Stephan and Dash'n Jeffrey who were hold'n off the entire butternut tide on that trail. Fire'n could be ayred com'n from the trail and I'm sure Stephan and Dash'n Jeffrey were offer'n the blaggards the ballyhoo they were in dire need of.

Lt Stosh gathered tre of us and we scaled the timbered embankment agin to assist Stephan & Dash'n Jeffrey. To our delight we found the lads well and in possession of the trail - what good cess I taut. Outposts were established by Cpl Stumpy Goeser & Stumpy Jeffrey half way up the slope and additional pickets were placed around our perimeter to be mindful of our flanks.

As the noon sun passed overhead the arder came to relieve the outposts and discover the interest the enemy had taken in the ridge. Stephan, Cpl Casey - a fine lad from Co B, Pvt Donald Edward Brook, and oulde Basil St Arthur were on anutter scout'n mission on the trail. We were ardered to observe any Secesh outposts and not to engage the enemy. Cpl Casey and I were in the lead with Pvt Brook and Sgt Stephan aft. We were spread'n out to maintain our vision of aytech utter. I hod just gone ahead to confer with Cpl Casey when a shot rang out and we realized we were cut off from Stephan & Pvt Brook. We could ayer the dar'ty traitors on the trail on our flanks so Cpl Casey & Oulde Basil left the trail and scurried up the slope for our dar'est existence. Being captured was not our intention and we decided we best keep to that. The Johnnies would have been fools to follow us through the thicket that we were equally foolish to attempt to navigate, but, Oulde Erin's luck with with us and our escape was made. Oulde Basil is definitely tankful for all the experiance of crawl'n out of crowded public houses from Connemara well down to Cork. We made our way back toward our lines and were relieved to see Lt Stosh, Sgt Stephan, & Pvt Brook safe and sound on the trail. Lt Stosh's farst quare'y was as to who had fired the shot. Pvt Brook responded he had and Stephan answered aye to the second quare'y to who ardered the shot be fired. Lt Stosh ardered Stephan & Pvt Brook to secure arms and then ardered Cpl Casey and meself to fix bayonets. Stephan taught dis a rather odd arder since there was not a menace'n cloud in the heavens. Apparently Pvt Brook had been in this situation prior for he was will'n to explain to caw'sun Stephan that they were under arrest. Oulde Basil was tink'n perhaps caw'sun Stosh was just arnery for all the climb'n back and forth on the ridge. We escorted the lads down to head quarters to discuss their fate with the Col. It turns out we had some kind of parlay & truce with the Secesh and Pvt Brook had given a response not intended by our command staff. A truce with a Traitor is like Her Royal Majesty snaze'n in Kildare - 2 tings Oulde Basil believes can be ignar'd. The Col showed his great displayshure, but, Stephan resolutely explan'd the situation and his arders to shoot was followed by Pvt Brook to prevent the compromise of our position and perhaps that of our entire Regt. The Johnnies that chased Cpl Casey & Oulde Basil tru the tangled wilderness of that ridge were not about for talk'n, that's for sure. Hurrah for Stephan! - and more so Bully for his ability to get out of a mess with all his stripes and arse in tact. Reminds me of a time Cpl Edward was on shore leave in the Orient. anyway, that's another chapter for another time.

Arders came that the time to strike was at hand and we formed companies and began our march on the Reb garrison. The Gray blaggards' welcome was less than hospitable and our 2 paces announced we were there to pay call. Our company was to assault the farm through a recently sharn carnfield while 2nd company was sent over the asil'y farded creek to try and flank their position. Our company's farst platoon was sent ahead as skare'mishers while the rest of us formed a reserve behind some earthworks we had hastily, yet soundly, constructed.

Lt Stosh took comand of the skare'mish line and led the lads forward tru the field. The Rebels have'n our lads in plain sight began the Divil's wark of try'n to shoot down many a promis'n soul well before his time. The Rebel field pace was fire'n high as the shell impacted behind us. The Secesh rifles were take'n a toll on farst platoon and we was ardered up to fill the gaps walking over many a writhing mass of humanity rache'n out for one mar breath of fade'n life. There was no time for lament'n for the suffer'n of others. I met up with caw'sun Stosh behind a haystack -- what a large haystack was do'n in the middle of a carnfield I can't rightly answer, but, it was enough haven for us to offer resistance to the foe. The Johnnies tried to send some marksmen up the wooded ledge on our left, but, they were cut down while race'n with some of our lads to the top. We were about 80 rods from the fence surround'n the farm yard and our progress was be'n checked by our stubborn foe in our front. Lt Stosh ardered us to give some mar of our deadly attention to the field pace on our right and we were able to negate its use. By this time 2nd company had formed on the garrison's left flank and we had them held within the jaws of Sumter's vengeance. The foe's defenses melted away like wax before the flame and the few remain'n blaggards took to run'n for the woods south of the farmstead. With our enemy's vacate'n the premises we entered and found quarters for the surgeons to perform their bloody work. Lt Stosh formed us into a detail and we went out into the carnfield to render comfort to the suffer'n and proper burial to those departed ones in need. The lads were excavate'n with any'ting at hand - bayonets, cups, sticks, plates. Caw'sun Stephan showed himself to be quite the man of the cloth as he gave absolution to the fallen. We won't soon forget the lads that gave every'ting to take that simple farmyard somewhere in narth'n Virginia. We'll continue to caulk our canvas sheathed, cracker box huts from the anticipated freez'n gusts and hope to see ye around our fire soon enough.

Slá inte Dear caw'sun and Erin's Joy be upon Ye,

Basil St Arthur McHugh