

## **THE SIGEL REGIMENT**

by

JAMES S. PULA

Voorhees College

Rapid stacatto drumbeats pierced the deep bass tones of martial brass as long lines of marching men moved steadily down the street amid shouts and applause from the throngs that lined the paths. Here and there men saluted or removed their caps as the colors swung past. Necks turned and twisted to catch a glimpse of father or husband, brother or son, while several young ladies rushed forward to drape floral bouquets about the bayoneted muskets of their sweethearts. Shouts of recognition and friendly waves came from well-wishers as the marchers passed. "Ludwig! Hans! Friedrich! Karol! Franz!" It was not Berlin; it was not 1914, nor even 1939. It was the United States of America, it was 1862, and the 26th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry was marching off to the war.

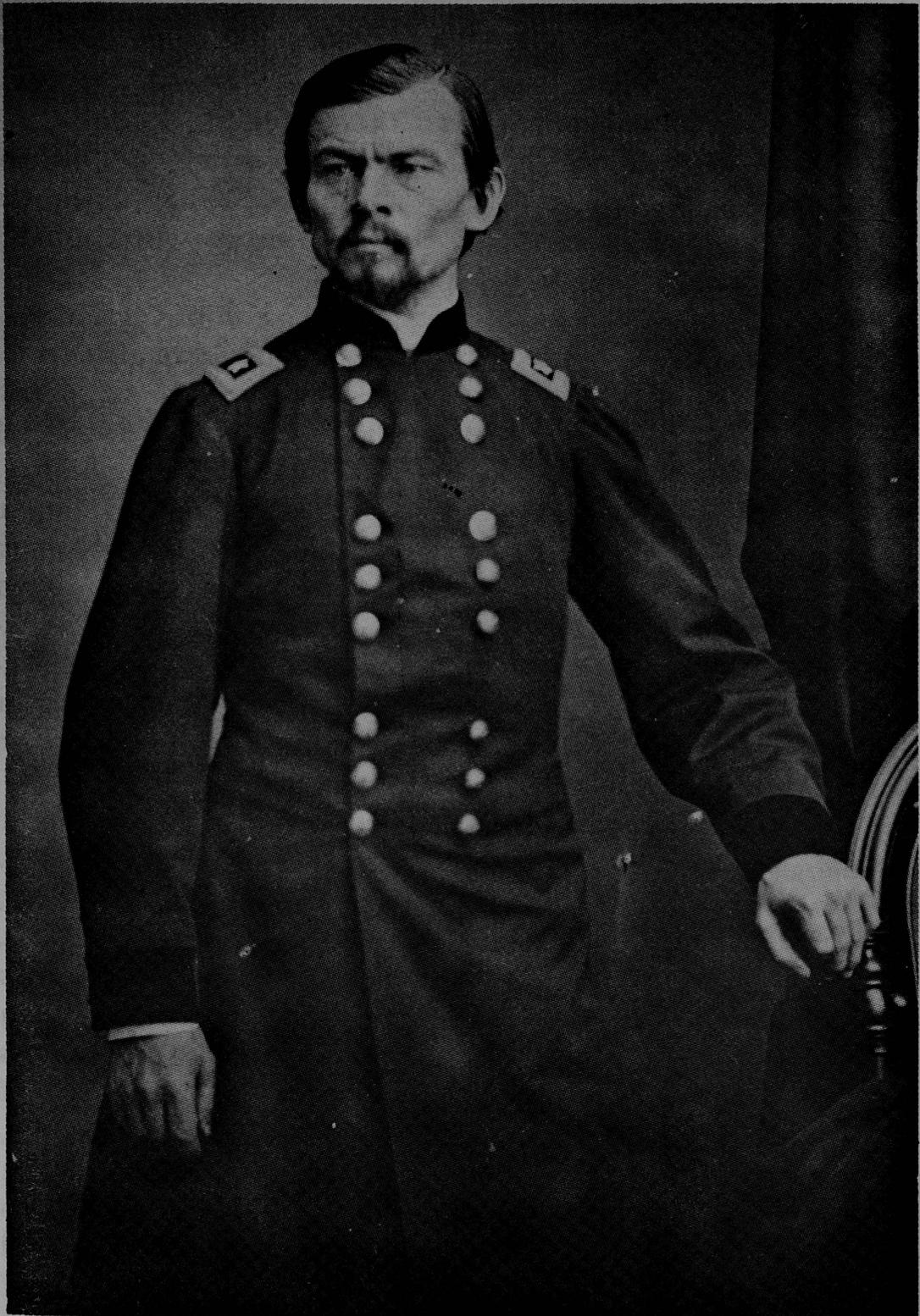
Even before it left the state the 26th Wisconsin held some claim to uniqueness, and not simply because most of the men on its muster rolls were immigrants or first generation Americans. There were dozens of so-called "foreign" regiments in the service of the Union Army, most of them decidedly Republican in their political persuasion. But Democrats predominated among the 26th, and on its rolls were scores of prominent, widely-traveled, well-read soldiers, making it one of the most literate regiments in the service.

Formed under the spirit of the German republican movement of 1848, the regiment trained at Camp Sigel, Milwaukee, where volunteers from Milwaukee, Racine, Manitowoc, and Fond du Lac County met to drill and perfect the skills they would need once they reached the battlefields. Known within the state as the "2nd German Regiment," the 26th Wisconsin adopted Franz Sigel, a leading German revolutionary figure,

as its patron saint. Thus it became the "Sigel Regiment" through popular usage. Indeed, many of the soldiers in the ranks came to the United States after serving with the unsuccessful revolutionary armies in Europe. The result was a curious mixture of mature men who learned their discipline in the Old Country, with younger men, often sons of those early immigrants, who were new to the demands of war, adding youthful zest and energy to the steadied discipline of their seniors.<sup>1</sup>

Thirty-year-old Wilhelm Jacobs, a successful Milwaukee banker, a native of Braunschweig, Germany, and a fine tenor in the local German Sängerbund, became colonel of the regiment, while other prominent immigrants served as officers and enlisted men. Blonde, blue-eyed, and handsome, Hans Böbel was a German "freethinker," and a founding member of both the Milwaukee "Turnverein" and the "Bund freier Menschen." Henry Bätz, a native of Stockhausen, Hesse-Darmstadt, and a Manitowoc politician, enlisted as an officer; while the surgeon was Dr. Franz Hübschmann, a native of Saxe-Weimar who served on the Milwaukee school board, waged an unsuccessful campaign for the Democratic nomination for governor of Wisconsin in 1852, and served as an instrumental liberal member of the 1846 constitutional convention which won for foreign-born citizens the right to vote in Wisconsin.<sup>2</sup>

One of the more famous members of the Sigel Regiment was Bernhard Domschke, a native of Freiberg, Saxony, who established himself as a revolutionary and editor in Saxony before moving to the United States in 1851. An ardent defender of liberalism and the anti-slavery crusade, Domschke worked on newspapers in New York and Boston before joining radical editor Karl Heinzen to publish an anti-slavery journal in Louisville, Kentucky. In 1854 the pair authored the radical "Louisville Platform" which denounced all racial and class privileges, attacked slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, and advocated free lands for settlers, easier and quicker naturalization procedures, and equal political and



*General Franz Sigel, patron saint of the 26th Wisconsin*

Photo Courtesy of the Library of Congress

social rights for blacks and women. Burned out by a Louisville mob, Domschke moved on to Wisconsin, penniless and destitute, to become editor of several short-lived newspapers. By 1860 his influence was such that he won election as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Chicago. When the war finally came, Domschke, closing down his presses, marched down to the recruiter's office with the bulk of his employees.<sup>3</sup>

Martin Young was born in France, the son of a merchant, and Anton Kettlar served as a miller in Germany before immigrating to the United States in 1852. In 1855 he joined General Walker's army in Nicaragua, rising to the rank of captain. As the proprietor of a Janesville, Wisconsin, beerhall, he was a logical choice for recruiting officer. Karl Doerflinger enlisted as a private at the age of nineteen, rising to the rank of first lieutenant by the time he reached twenty-one. Adam Muenzenberger, age 32, left a wife, four children, a successful shoemaking business, and the secretaryship of the Greenfield "Burger-Verein" to enlist. For Charles Wickesberg, a carpenter by trade, the impetus of a broken love affair caused him to enlist.<sup>4</sup>

The Sigel Regiment, 988 strong, left Milwaukee on October 6, 1862, amid great shows of enthusiasm by the local populace. Three days of being jammed into uncomfortably cramped, cold, and damp railway cars cooled their ardor somewhat, but the reception they received in Baltimore sent their spirits soaring to new heights. Unlike the greeting the Northern troops received there in 1861, the citizens spoiled the Badgers with lavish cheers and applause, followed by a huge feast of delicious steamed oysters. Reluctantly leaving this paradise, the regiment moved quickly over the rails to Arlington Heights, gratefully acknowledging the cheers at every station along the way. They had two days to stretch their legs and collect their thoughts at Arlington Heights; then it was off to their assigned command at Centreville, Virginia.<sup>5</sup>

October 15 found the regiment drawn up at attention, their eyes fixed on a general officer about to review this new

JAMES S. PULA

---



*Colonel Wladimir Krzyzanowski*  
Photo Courtesy of the Library of Congress

addition to his corps. The officer was Major General Franz Sigel, and the troops were ecstatic over their assignment to his command. Shoulders back, chests out, each soldier stood rigid with pride as Sigel strode before them to address his troops. Their eyes brightened and broad smiles lit their faces as he complimented them on their appearance, while intimating to them that if the war was to be won it would be up to the German soldiers to shoulder a major portion of the military burden.<sup>6</sup>

Alongside Sigel stood Brigadier General Carl Schurz of Wisconsin, a revolutionary compatriot of Sigel's from the German upheavals, who commanded the division to which the Sigel Regiment found itself attached. The troops knew Schurz well from his tenure in Wisconsin politics, as well as from his ardent campaigning on behalf of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. To them, the combination of Sigel and Schurz as commanding officers could not have been better. Even the Democrats, who despised Schurz's Republican affiliations, admired him as a champion of the German revolutionary movement, as well as a kind, humane, compassionate commanding officer. The review and speeches concluded, the men expressed their pleasure with three rousing hurrahs.<sup>7</sup>

The Badgers felt well at home in the Eleventh Corps, which contained a large percentage of Germanic immigrants, as well as in Schurz's 3rd Division, which was almost exclusively Germanic or foreign-born. Assigned to the 2nd Brigade of the 3rd Division, the Wisconsin troops were not familiar with their brigade commander, Colonel Wladimir Krzyzanowski of the 58th New York Infantry. They soon learned that he came to the United States in 1846 as a refugee of the ill-fated Mieroslowski Insurrection in Poland. A liberal Republican and a philosophical democrat, he loudly denounced slavery while speaking on behalf of Abraham Lincoln's candidacy in 1860. They soon found, too, that he was also a humane officer, caring for his troops as a father would care for so many sons.<sup>8</sup>

Krzyzanowski's Brigade consisted of four regiments of so-called "foreign" troops. In addition to the Sigel Regiment, there were the 75th Pennsylvania under Colonel Franz Mahler, the 58th New York under Lt. Colonel Frederick Gellman, and the 119th New York under Colonel Elias Peissner, a professor at Union College and former delegate to the 1860 Republican Convention in Chicago. The men of the Sigel Regiment fraternized well with their fellow soldiers in the brigade, the only problems seem to have arisen within the regiment when the fall elections rolled around. Adam Muenzenberger, for one, complained bitterly that some of the Republican officers in his company prevented the enlisted men, who were solidly Democratic, from casting their ballots. Some hostilities existed between the small, militant Republican faction and the Democrats, but the problem ameliorated itself when several of the Republicans resigned, while the others ceased their agitations as the election passed into history.<sup>9</sup>

In the brief time they spent at Arlington Heights and Centreville the men continued their drills, while passing their spare time learning how to build log cabins, bunks, mattresses, and carve sweet-briar pipes and chess figures. Many of the cabins they constructed had very ornate, aesthetically appealing chimneys fashioned out of the Virginia red clay, which they also used to mold a myriad of other items including rings and trinkets. On the picket line a frequent occurrence was a visit to the home of any one of a number of young Virginia maidens whose brothers were conspicuously absent. The men particularly enjoyed the delicious "Johnny cakes" which the women baked for one U. S. dollar apiece.<sup>10</sup>

But the idleness could not, and did not last. On November 2 the regiment broke camp and headed for Gainesville. On the 5th they suffered their first casualty when a musket ball wounded Lieutenant John Orth on the picket line at Thoroughfare Gap. The march continued, as all along the line the men engaged in a new pastime—foraging. Wherever the regiment pitched its camp for the night the young men rushed off to

liberate food from the surrounding countryside. They never returned emptyhanded, bringing in pigs, chickens, ducks, turkeys, and geese in large numbers. With campfires well stoked, roasted meat proved plentiful, and nightly feasts were commonplace. "No horse or cow is safe from the old regiment," noted Adam Muenzenberger. "The soldiers take everything along on the plea that they wish to pay the rebels for the treatment at the last battle of Bull Run."<sup>11</sup>

As the march continued the men began to grumble about the pay which had eluded them since their enlisting. In fact, most of them had yet to see the bonuses they were promised when they first enlisted. But their anger over this was tempered by the hearty laugh they enjoyed while reading stories of scandals surrounding the implementation of the draft in Milwaukee. "We have a great laugh at the simpletons who laughed at us because we volunteered," Adam Muenzenberger told his wife. "Please let me know who was drafted if you can find out so that I can laugh at their lot the way they laughed at mine."<sup>12</sup>

The march continued on through the Bull Run Mountains to Haymarket, Virginia, where Southern sympathizers lined the streets to greet the Northern troops with jeers and insolent shouts of reproach. Undaunted, the Germans broke into a rousing marching song containing the lyrics "In the South, in the South, where the German guns explode and the rebels fall." The long columns continued to wind through mountains and valleys, and then back toward Centreville which they reached on December 1.<sup>13</sup>

At Centreville the troops received recent newspapers from home. In them they found themselves accused of running away from a battle at Gainesville; a battle that was completely fictitious. They blamed the stories on a recent slur directed at the newspaper in question by Lieutenant Lehman. In commenting on the stories he read in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Adam Muenzenberger mused that for the paper's editors "It certainly would be aggravating to get a good dig

from a Dutchman and not be able to return it. You know, we are no Yankees.”<sup>14</sup>

As December came to a close the campsites were swept by snowstorms and terribly cold, biting winds beat cruelly upon the exposed pickets. The men built small fireplaces in their tents, but the intermittent snow and freezing rain made cold and dampness a daily companion. Muddy roads froze in the evening and thawed to become soft and mushy by late morning. Since the road conditions impeded the supply wagons, the troops, for the first time, had to subsist on five crackers and two tablespoons of coffee per day. Firewood gave out, no pay proved forthcoming, and diseases began making the rounds of the ill-prepared camps.<sup>15</sup>

On December 31 the entire Eleventh Corps stood to for its bi-monthly muster, with the Sigel Regiment being acclaimed the best of all the units. Colonels Krzyzanowski and Jacobs received well-deserved praise for the regiment’s showing, returning their men’s dedication with compassion and fatherly care. Colonel Krzyzanowski endeared himself to the Badgers through his daily visits to their hospital and campfires, the sympathetic ear he turned to their problems, and his attempts to pursue their justified complaints with the higher authorities. As a New Year’s present the colonel supplied each of his regiments with a large barrel of whiskey, enough flour for each soldier to obtain three tablespoons of the precious nutrient, and generous quantities of molasses. The jubilant troops spent the holiday baking pancakes—their first since joining the army—singing, and telling stories around their campfires.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of January the regiment participated in General Burnside’s ill-fated “Mud March” which saw the men at times covered in slime nearly up to their belt buckles. The constant rains turned everything into a giant swamp. Guns parked overnight on firm ground were found to be sunk up to their hubs in sand and mud by the next morning. After three days of this rain and slime one officer submitted a written request for “50 men, 25 feet high to work in mud 18 feet deep.”<sup>17</sup>

During the spring of 1863 several men of the Sigel Regiment managed to get short furloughs to visit Washington and New York, but the remainder of the regiment was confined to camp where they constantly drilled and stood watch on the picket lines. Rain and snow fell often, even into late April. Colonel Jacobs personally visited the men at their outposts, and arranged to have each guard relieved after two days instead of the usual three. Each picket, when he arrived back in camp, received a large glass of beer as a reward for his service on the exposed picket posts.<sup>18</sup>

In March the troops finally received a partial allotment of their accumulated pay, but there remained much bitterness about not receiving the full amount. Rations came in irregularly, and the men were generally fatigued from the foul weather and long hours of working on road construction. At the bi-monthly muster in February Colonel Jacobs gave each company four dozen packages of tobacco supplied by his wife, but there was little that anyone could do about the emaciating diseases that daily thinned the blue ranks. Private Joseph Kowar, age twenty-one, died of heart disease on September 19, 1862. Between that date and April, 1863, at least twenty-three other soldiers died, while countless scores were down sick with everything from typhoid fever and tuberculosis to chronic diarrhoea and dysentery. But the Germans were lucky. Although they were satirized and stereotyped because of their fondness for sauerkraut, onions, and larger beer, their consumption of these foodstuffs proved a blessing in disguise for they were excellent antidotes for dysentery. Throughout the war the Germanic troops suffered far less from this one disease than did the "native American" troops.<sup>19</sup>

Through all of the difficulties in supply, in pay, and in reinforcement, which plagued the German troops in the Eleventh Corps, General Franz Sigel lobbied long and hard in Washington on their behalf. After continuous disagreements and rebuffs from the War Department, he finally tendered his resignation in a protest over the neglect of his troops' needs.

The War Department eagerly accepted the resignation, assigning Oliver Otis Howard to lead the corps in Sigel's place. The Germans blamed Howard for Sigel's departure, and in any case were outraged that the authorities assigned an outsider over the head of Carl Schurz, the ranking officer in the Eleventh Corps. Howard, who took over on March 2, was conversant in German, and attempted to get to know his men to some degree. But his own prejudices were not very well hidden, and in addition to his own problems he brought with him two other officers to replace two well-liked leaders of the Eleventh Corps. While Howard met with an outwardly cordial reception, there was much complaint over the loss of Franz Sigel and it was no small task to try to raise a cheer in the ranks when Howard rode past.<sup>20</sup>

Friday, April 10, dawned crisp and cold. A biting wind stung the fingers, ears, and noses of the men as they stood at attention while Colonel Jacobs addressed them. Next to the Badgers stood the other regiments of the brigade, followed, in a long line, by the rest of the corps. Off to another side, across a wide, wind-swept field, was a solitary reviewing stand on which stood a host of high-ranking officers and governmental officials including General Joseph Hooker, commander of the Army of the Potomac, and President Abraham Lincoln. For several days the President had been reviewing units of the Eastern army, and April 10 was the day he chose to end his tour on the front with a review of the Eleventh Corps.<sup>21</sup>

"Boys," Colonel Jacobs began, "when you march past act as though I were in front holding the review so that we get praise again the way we always do."<sup>22</sup>

Suddenly the boom of guns echoed across the field as the artillery batteries began a salute from right to left. The infantry bands struck up "Hail to the Chief," and the long lines of foot-soldiers began to move out across the field. As the infantry strode past the reviewing stand, the regimental bands, massed behind the Presidential party, sent strains of martial music surging through the wind. Drums, trumpets, and fifes

pierced the gloom and cold of the day, bringing a smile to the lips of the Chief Executive. President Lincoln loved the martial flair of the Eleventh Corps' German brass bands, which were generally acknowledged to be the best in the service.<sup>23</sup>

As Schurz's division tramped past the accumulated dignitaries, admiring looks of approval illuminated many a stoic face. "These men," noted Noah Brooks, "impressed us as the best drilled and most soldierly of all who passed before us during our stay."<sup>24</sup> Marching next to last, the 26th Wisconsin won praise as the best regiment in the Army of the Potomac, with Krzyzanowski's command singled out as the best appearing brigade. Lavish praises were once again passed around, and the brigade commander formally thanked his men for their outstanding efforts.<sup>25</sup>

April 19 found Wisconsin Governor Salomon in camp. A brief review was held in his honor, at which he praised the regiment for its services. That night members of the Milwaukee Sangerbund serenaded the Governor with "In Der Heimat Ist Es Schoen," and "Das Treue Deutsche Herz."

"In my whole life," the Governor declared, "I have never been so proud of my German descent as I am now in the camp of the Twenty-Sixth Regiment."<sup>26</sup>

The festivities at an end, it was now time for the Army of the Potomac to renew its drive on Richmond. The 26th Wisconsin broke camp on April 28 in a driving rain storm as "Fighting Joe" Hooker led three army corps off on a circuitous march of eighty-four hours duration that covered forty-five muddy miles and crossed two major rivers. At the conclusion of the march this large Federal force found itself on the flank and rear of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Camped close to the Chancellor House, in the heart of the dense forest of second-growth pine and scrub oak known as the "Wilderness," the troops with Krzyzanowski's Brigade made a brief advance on May 1, only to be ordered back to their positions soon after they left. They spent the rest of the night

catching up on their sleep under the orders of the army commander.<sup>27</sup>

The following morning, May 2, the officers of the Eleventh Corps could clearly see long columns of Confederate infantry marching off to the west toward the Federal right flank. Messengers rushed off to corps and army headquarters with repeated urgent warnings, but Hooker remained convinced that Lee was in full retreat, and Howard was completely oblivious to the danger. Headquarters officers who despised the German troops in the corps repeatedly dismissed their warnings, rejecting Carl Schurz's offer to realign his whole division facing westward, and going so far as to call the immigrants cowards.<sup>28</sup>

The price of this blind prejudice began to manifest itself about 6:00 P. M. As the men lounged about sleeping, playing cards, and cooking supper, a volley of musketry suddenly crashed out of the woods to the west. Long lines of gray-clad infantrymen under "Stonewall" Jackson surged from the covering underbrush onto the exposed flank of the Eleventh Corps. In minutes the attackers, who outnumbered the surprised defenders by close to four to one, pushed their way down the only avenue of escape, shattering one regiment after another like so many dominoes stacked end on end. Against a hurriedly prepared front of one or two regiments at a time the 33,000 Confederates advanced in three consecutive parallel lines stretching out for more than a mile across their front. On they pushed, attacking frontally, and outflanking their opponents on both sides. It was all the beleaguered Federals could do to escape with their lives and their equipment.<sup>29</sup>

Luckily for the Federal cause Carl Schurz had disregarded the apathetic attitude of his superiors and placed seven of his regiments in a position facing west to guard against such an attack. To the south, at the Dowdall Tavern, he placed Alexander Schimmelfennig's Brigade, reinforced by the 119th New York of Krzyzanowski's Brigade. To the north, at the Hawkins' Farm, he stationed the 58th New York (the "Polish Legion")

and the 26th Wisconsin under the personal supervision of Colonel Krzyzanowski. The 82nd Ohio, an unattached regiment, was slightly behind the line in a reserve position.<sup>30</sup>

Colonels Jacobs and Krzyzanowski placed the Wisconsin regiment skillfully behind what little cover there was, sending Captain Pizzala with Lieutenants Wallber, Doerflinger, and 100 sharpshooters, chosen from the ten best shots in each of the ten companies, into the woods ahead of the regiments as skirmishers. Soon a huge wave of Southern infantrymen bore down upon the small command. They fired a volley that sent several Confederates sprawling, then turned to make a run for their regiment. Captain Pizzala fell dead with a bullet through his head. When Lieutenant Doerflinger emerged from the woods he found himself opposite the color guard of the "Polish Legion." Praying that they would not mistake him for a Confederate, he raced across the clearing, then and there annihilating all previous regimental records for the 75 yards dash. Recognizing him, the New Yorkers yelled to him and his men to hurry out of their line of fire. Doerflinger raced through the blue line, turned left, sped past the colors, and did not stop until he found his own company.<sup>31</sup>

In seconds the rebel line emerged from the woods. The 58th New York met it with several quick volleys that stunned the Confederates into recoiling back into the woods. From there the Southerners opened a telling fire that killed the regimental commander, Captain Frederick Braun, and sprawled casualties haphazardly about the ground. After a few minutes the regiment retired behind a small bluff for protection. From there it continued to support the flank of the 26th Wisconsin.<sup>32</sup>

The Badgers, fighting in their very first engagement, were attacked from the front, and obliquely from the right at the same time. A quick rush by the Southerners would have annihilated the small regiment, but the unexpected resistance momentarily halted the advance elements of the Confederate attack and the impetus of the assault was lost. There was little cover for the Wisconsin troops, but they stuck doggedly to

their task, absorbing horrible casualties in but a short time. In the front lines Captain August Schueler of Company K was carried to the rear with a fatal wound in the first few minutes of the engagement. Lt. Doerflinger, still catching his wind from his narrow escape, took command.<sup>33</sup>

Amid the turmoil Adam Muenzenberger rammed charge after charge into his musket, firing as fast as he could load. All about him his friends, neighbors, and relatives in Company C were groaning, crumpling, and falling to the ground. First Lieutenant Robert Mueller suffered an early wound, and the second lieutenant was killed. Captain Henry Rauth was wounded and captured, while Sergeant Jacob Michel received a mortal wound. Louis Manz received a painful head wound, and a quick look around found the immediate area covered by the broken, maimed bodies of men named Springling, Burkhard, Deany, Stirn, Bigalke, Weiss, Krueger, Beres, Fritz, Luther, Urich, Hermann, and Koch.<sup>34</sup>

In Company D Peter Lorsch suffered through three separate wounds. A minié ball shattered Friedrich Puls' knee joint in Company F, and another inflicted a painful wound on Jan Waskowicz in Company E. Twenty men became casualties in Company E, while Company G lost thirty-two. Death and destruction lay everywhere as the Confederates regrouped to press home their attack. Desperately seeking to hold his position, Colonel Krzyzanowski sent an aide, Lieutenant Louis H. Orlemann, to General Schurz for reinforcements. There were none to be had, so Schurz mercifully ordered the remnants of the two regiments to retreat.<sup>35</sup>

Krzyzanowski ordered Jacobs to face his men about, but the Badger colonel refused to abandon the field his men were buying with their lives. It was a brave gesture, but Confederate skirmishers were already pressing around behind the regiment. If the retreat were delayed for only a few minutes the whole regiment would be captured or destroyed. In Company K, Lt. Doerflinger lay on the ground, his ankle shattered by a musket ball. As he looked out over the scene of destruction

at which his company lost more than thirty men, Colonel Krzyzanowski rode in among the embattled infantrymen and personally led them to safety. Before he passed out, the wounded lieutenant counted six distinct ranks of Southern infantry passing over him. Then he lost consciousness. But he was lucky; many of the Badger wounded crawled into the underbrush for protection, only to be burned alive when it was accidentally set afire by an artillery shell.<sup>36</sup>

The regiment retreated slowly, pausing briefly to fire on its pursuers. It fell into line with Buschbeck's Brigade some 400 yards to the rear, and put up a good fight for half-an-hour. Finally, outflanked again, it retreated with the remnants of the corps. The Confederates, badly disorganized, suffering grievous wounds of their own, offered no pursuit as darkness closed in on the scene of desolation.<sup>37</sup>

The brilliant stand of the 26th Wisconsin Infantry bought the time necessary for the Federal artillery to escape, and the rest of the troops to reform into a makeshift defensive line. Their stubborn resistance saved the rest of the army from becoming engaged on May 2, and threw the Confederates into such confusion that they accidentally shot and killed their own commanding officer, "Stonewall" Jackson, later that night. Fighting in their first battle, their resistance was fanatical. They received justified plaudits from their brigade commander, from General Schurz, and from a host of others present on that bloody field.<sup>38</sup>

But the end was not achieved without great sacrifice. Of all the regiments that fought at Chancellorsville during the next few days, the 26th Wisconsin ranked seventh in the total number of casualties—198 out of 471 in action—and suffered a fatality rate of eleven percent, one of the highest in the battle.<sup>39</sup>

Despite their heroism, their suffering, and their achievements, the men of the Sigel Regiment soon began to read newspaper stories characterizing them as a pack of cowards who ran away at the first sight of the enemy. Stung and in-

furiated by this gross injustice, the men wrote home to deny the vicious lies being spread about them. "I deem it my duty as a husband and father," wrote Adam Muenzenberger, "to write to you again and more particularly because the newspapers have published so much trash about the 11th Corps which no doubt disturbed you as well as others." Charles Wickesberg, the twenty-one year old son of an immigrant from the Dusseldorf area, went even further in his denunciation: "All the papers write lies," he said. "There are a few drunken scoundrels who have those things put into the paper. In time the truth will come out." The blame, Wickesberg said, rested solely on General Howard. "He is a Yankee, and that is why he wanted to have us slaughtered, because most of us are Germans. He better not come into the thick of battle a second time, then he won't escape."<sup>40</sup>

There was a brief rest for the troops as the two opposing armies jockeyed for position. They then set off on a fast march to the north following Robert E. Lee's invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania. Along the route, when they passed close to troops from the other corps, they were taunted by mocking and abusive jeers. "I fights mit Sigel," the proud rallying cry of the German-Americans, was thrown back into their faces in the form of "I fights mit Sigel, und runs mit Schurz." Officers and men alike were infuriated, all the more so because their superior officers condoned, and even helped to spread these ugly misrepresentations.<sup>41</sup>

Marching north through Virginia under a suffocating June sun, the troops staggered through the dust and dirt kicked up along the roadways, availing themselves of every opportunity to cool off and clean up by bathing in the streams over which they passed. Panting along with dry mouths and wet skins, the troops raided strawberry and blackberry patches along the routes of march, and nearly tore apart several unfortunate cherry trees whose path they crossed. After a very long 214 miles under the constant pressure of oppressive heat and Confederate bushwhackers, the Sigel regiment finally reached

the Potomac River and crossed into Maryland as part of the first corps to reach that state on the northward march.<sup>42</sup>

June 28 saw the replacement of Joe Hooker with General George Gordon Meade, a sad-eyed, mild mannered Pennsylvanian, as commander of the Army of the Potomac. Meade caught up with the Eleventh Corps at Emmitsburg, Maryland, where he paused briefly for the officers to have their picture taken with their new commander. The troops bedded down on the grounds of the St. Joseph College nunnery. Several of them got permission to receive Communion at the church, and everyone is said to have behaved in exemplary fashion.<sup>43</sup>

The troops were well pleased with the removal of Hooker, but they had little time to savor the moment. It rained all day June 29 and 30, with marching orders coming in early on July 1. Confederates were reported near the Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg, some thirteen miles away. The Sigel Regiment was on the march by 8:30 A. M. Colonel Krzyzanowski led his brigade forward at the usual pace so as not to wear them out before they reached their objective, but the usual ten minute rest periods each hour were eliminated. They marched in a torrential downpour that wet everyone to the skin. Mud and slime poured into the shoes of those lucky enough to have footwear, and walking became difficult and laborious on the churned-up roads. Halfway to their objective a messenger met them with word that the First Corps was engaged and for them to hurry up. On they pushed at the quick-step, now under a brilliant July sun that drowned the men in their own sweat, and made the dried mud cling to their clothes, hair, and skin. Bernhard Domschke pronounced it "the most difficult and exhausting march" he ever made.<sup>44</sup>

A mile from Gettysburg the sounds of musketry reached the ears of the marchers. They pushed on over the last mile on a dead run, making the thirteen mile march, a good day's travel under normal conditions, in just three and one-half hours. Panting for breath, they rushed into Gettysburg "wet as cats, hungry as wolves."<sup>45</sup> As they raced through the streets

the citizens lined the roads to cheer them, and several came forward with buckets of water for the men to quench their thirst. "Everyone's blood flows quicker," Domschke wrote, "every pulse beats louder, every nerve is more sensitive, and every one feels that he is living faster than he was half an hour since."<sup>46</sup>

On the north side of town the regiments paused briefly to catch their breath in an apple orchard. As the first sergeants called the roll, each man bowed his head in silent prayer or meditation before going into battle.<sup>47</sup>

In the next few hours they were doomed to meet the greater part of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, intent upon seizing the heights surrounding Gettysburg. The Eleventh Corps pushed forward, whisking aside Confederate skirmishers and establishing a defensive line in the open plain north of town. Raked by twenty-four guns from Oak Hill, the blue-clad infantrymen soon found themselves assailed by twenty-four more guns and a whole Confederate infantry division that began arriving across Rock Creek on the flank and rear of the Federal forces. Battered by the crossfire of forty-eight guns, the troops held fast until they were finally assaulted by elements of two divisions of Confederate infantry.<sup>48</sup>

Bullets and shells rained down reminding the men of a heavy hail storm. Again in the forefront of the fight, the Sigel Regiment suffered accordingly. Lt. Colonel Hans Böbel lost a leg, and major Henry Bätz fell wounded. Lt. Sigmund Juenger and seventeen men of Company A became casualties, while in Company B twenty more men lay on the ground. Men whose roots lay all over Europe fought and fell that day, men with names like Zuehlsdorff, Berlandi, Rosenthal, Schneider, Simonek, Johnson, Swoboda, Rezac and Grochowski. But not a German, nor a Pole, not a Hungarian, nor a Czech fell that day, they were all Americans in the truest sense of the word.<sup>49</sup>

Casualty rates were astronomical. In Krzyzanowski's Brigade the 75th Pennsylvania lost 128 of its 208 men in fifteen

minutes. One hundred men were down in the 119th New York, while the 82nd Ohio lost more than 150 men of its 258. General Schurz' horse was shot through the neck, and Colonel Krzyzanowski was painfully injured when his incapacitated horse fell on top of him. Though fighting for breath, he remained on the field to direct his five regiments, every one of which lost its commanding officer as a casualty.<sup>50</sup>

"The troops," wrote Krzyzanowski, "were sweaty, blackened by gunpowder, and they looked more like animals than human beings." The men fought with "bloodshot eyes," he observed, the "portrait of battle was a portrait of hell." Just when it appeared they would all be lost, the order to retreat to Cemetery Hill came through from General Howard.<sup>51</sup>

Falling back through town, the 26th Wisconsin, along with the rest of Krzyzanowski's Brigade, acted as the rear guards. Casualties continued to be heavy, including Bernhard Domschke, Adam Muenzenberger, and several other men who were trapped in dead-end streets and captured. A woman saw Charles Wickesberg wandering lost in the streets with blood gushing from his wounded right wrist. She pulled him into her home, bandaged his wound, and fed him some supper. Back on the field, Dr. Franz Hübschmann and nine volunteers stayed behind to administer to over 500 Federal wounded.<sup>52</sup>

It was dusk by the time the battered Sigel Regiment got into position on Cemetery Hill. They were in action since noon, more than six hours, and a staggering total of fifty-one percent of the men in the brigade they marched with were casualties. The butcher's bill was sickening, but they purchased vital time with their lives, and prevented the southern infantry from occupying the vital heights around Cemetery Hill.

That night they slept under the stars, bivouacked among the tombstones in the Gettysburg Cemetery. It was a quiet night, the silence broken only by the tramp of fresh troops marching into position and the clatter of artillery batteries going into place.

July 2 dawned bright and clear. The Sigel Regiment dug in on the outskirts of Gettysburg, their new home for two

full days. There they duelled with Confederate sharpshooters in the buildings close to Cemetery Hill, and supported the counterattack, led by Colonel Krzyzanowski, which defeated the Confederate attempt to take Cemetery Hill on the evening of July 2. Somewhat rested by July 4, Krzyzanowski led them off on a reconnaissance of Seminary Ridge where they captured forty-seven prisoners, while discovering that the Confederates were in full retreat.<sup>53</sup>

At Gettysburg the Sigel Regiment lost all save honor. The Badgers left 217 men at Gettysburg in killed, wounded, and prisoners. Half of the strength the regiment brought north into Pennsylvania did not march south again when the unit left Gettysburg to pursue the fleeing Army of Northern Virginia back through Maryland into its home state. Was the sacrifice in vain? No. Gettysburg was the largest battle ever fought on the North American continent, and more importantly, it marked the historic "High Tide" of the Confederacy. It was the last major offensive of the Army of Northern Virginia, and marked the beginning of the end of Southern dominance on Eastern battlefields. The victory was possible because the Sigel Regiment, along with the other maligned "foreign" regiments in the Eleventh Corps, sacrificed their lives against hopeless odds to save the vital Cemetery Hill position until the remainder of the Union Army could come up to occupy it.

After the conclusion of the Gettysburg Campaign, the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps were hastily sent by rail from Virginia, via Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky, to Tennessee where Southern forces were besieging a Federal army at Chattanooga under General Rosecrans. Loaded into dank boxcars which smelled of manure, crowded forty or sixty to a car, the Sigel Regiment raced off along the rails, arriving in Tennessee in only a few days time. The entire episode remains as the greatest movement of troops in the entire war; two full corps, numbering 20,000 men, over 3,000 horses, and innumerable wagons, were moved over 1,157 miles of rails in just over eleven days.<sup>54</sup>

Still attached to Krzyzanowski's Brigade, though now with less than 270 muskets, the Sigel Regiment was present at the Battles of Wauhatchie and Lookout Mountain, and held the skirmish line at Citico Creek near Missionary Ridge. Though they suffered little from enemy actions, they contributed materially to the raising of the Confederate siege of Chattanooga, joining in the pursuit of the fleeing rebels after the rout at Missionary Ridge.<sup>55</sup>

No sooner was the Chattanooga Campaign completed than the regiment was off on a forced march to relieve the Federal garrison at Knoxville, languishing under a siege conducted by Confederate General James Longstreet. The march took place under dreadful conditions, amid freezing temperatures, bitter winds, and violent rain squalls. Nights were intensely cold, causing much discomfort to men ordered to leave their tents and other baggage at Chattanooga. Rations soon gave out, forcing the army to subsist off the countryside. At the point of physical exhaustion, spirits were revived somewhat with the capture of a large Confederate supply base at London, Tennessee, but the fatigue and the inclement weather took their toll on the men's bodies and minds.<sup>56</sup>

With the approach of the Federal relief force, Longstreet broke off the siege and retreated. After a day's rest, the Sigel Regiment began to retrace its steps without ever having laid eyes upon the city their sacrifices saved. Rain and cold continued, shoes gave out, clothing proved too thin for the cold, and mud continually sucked at the marchers' feet and oozed about their ankles. They lived off the country, using molasses for sugar and roasting wheat and corn as substitutes for coffee. The conditions were so bad that Colonel Krzyzanowski pronounced the march his most "terrible ordeal."<sup>57</sup>

Though the regiment suffered few battle losses in the Chattanooga and Knoxville Campaigns, the terrible conditions it endured cost the lives of many soldiers who sickened and died. August Schroennicke, Gothard Franke and John Ollig died in December, with casualties mounting alarmingly

through the spring of 1864. Nor were the deaths confined to the Tennessee operations. In Virginia, prisoners taken at Gettysburg began to sicken and die in rebel prisons. A dozen died during the winter of 1863-64, including the chronicler Adam Muenzenberger.<sup>58</sup>

On April 4, 1864, the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps were consolidated into the new Twentieth Corps. Most of the German regiments were left in their desolate conditions to guard the railroads during Sherman's famous march to the sea, but the Sigel Regiment, its strength raised to 417 muskets, joined the Twentieth Corps as a fighting unit. During the march to the sea the bulk of the fighting, and the bulk of the casualties, fell on the Twentieth Corps. Though the Sigel Regiment never again had 61 killed in action as it did at Gettysburg, nor 53 as at Chancellorsville, under the command of Colonel Frederick Winkler it fought hard at Pine Mountain, Kenesaw Mountain, and Atlanta. It had fifteen killed at New Hope Church and Peach Tree Creek, lost fourteen at Culp's Farm, twelve at Resaca, including the unfortunate Charles Wickesberg, and ten at Averysboro. At Peach Tree Creek the regiment lost a total of 45 casualties, but it succeeded in capturing the bulk of the 33rd Mississippi Infantry, including the regimental colors.<sup>59</sup>

Bentonville was the last engagement for the 26th Wisconsin. It lost one man killed. During the duration of the war, the Sigel Regiment enrolled a total of 1,089 men. It lost 188 killed in action, while scores died from disease. Its battle death percentage of 17.3 ranked fifth of all Federal regiments for the entire war. The men suffered much, endured much, and it was in large part through their efforts that the Civil War did not last many more months, or even years. General William Cogswell praised the 26th Wisconsin as "one of the finest military organizations in the service."<sup>60</sup> "In the roll of honor of Wisconsin's regiments," wrote Edwin E. Bryant, "none are more deserving, none have a more glorious record than this regiment." But it was left for Charles K. Fox to cast a proper

light on the regiment's achievements. Largely on the basis of its dogged determination and sacrifice at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, Fox places the Sigel Regiment in the number one position on his list of the most gallant regiments in the volunteer service.<sup>61</sup>

N O T E S

<sup>1</sup>Charles H. Doerflinger, "Familiar History of The Twentysixth Regiment Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry," unpublished MS in the Wisconsin Historical Society; William Frayne Amman, *Personnel of the Civil War* (N. Y.: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961), II, 241.

<sup>2</sup>Adolf E. Zucker, *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848* (N. Y.: Columbia University Press, 1950), 54, 111, 280, 307; "Regimental Descriptive Book, 26th Wisconsin Infantry," MS in Wisconsin Historical Society; *Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography* (Madison: State Historical Society, 1960), 20, 105; Carl F. Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1952), 229; Franz Hübschmann, "Certificate of Naturalization," Document in U. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library.

<sup>3</sup>Wittke, 163-64, 213; Zucker, 119; *Wisc. Biog.*, 105; Bernhard Domschke, biographical papers, MS in Wisconsin Historical Society; J. J. Schlicher, "Bernhard Domschke," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, XXIX (1945/46), 324-25, 328.

<sup>4</sup>"Descriptive Book"; Charles Wickesberg, "Civil War Letters of Sergeant Charles Wickesberg," privately published, 2; Ruth S. Worthing, letter to author (August 3, 1971), 1; Charles Doerflinger, misc. papers in Wisconsin Historical Society, Estabrook Papers; Adam Muenzenberger, typescript of letters in Wisconsin Historical Society, preface, 1, 3.

<sup>5</sup>Doerflinger, "Familiar History," 5; Muenzenberger, 1: *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: U. S. Gov't. Printing Office, 1882-1900), III, III, 764.

<sup>6</sup>Muenzenberger, 1.

<sup>7</sup>Muenzenberger, 4; Wickesberg, "Letters," 6.

<sup>8</sup>Muenzenberger, passim; *Official Records*, I, XXI, 936.

<sup>9</sup>Muenzenberger, 12, 14; *Official Records*, I, XXI, 936.

<sup>10</sup>Doerflinger, "Familiar History," 1, 6.

<sup>11</sup>Muenzenberger, 8, quote from 6; "Descriptive Book"; Edwin B. Quiner, *The Military History of Wisconsin* (Chicago: Clarke & Co., 1866), 747.

<sup>12</sup>Muenzenberger, 12.

<sup>13</sup>Muenzenberger, passim.

<sup>14</sup>Muenzenberger, 14, 16, quote from 19.

<sup>15</sup>Muenzenberger, 16, 21, 24.

<sup>16</sup>Wickesberg, 9, Muenzenberger, 28.

<sup>17</sup>Robert Leskie, *The Wars of America* (N. Y.: Harner & Row, 1968), 454; Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz* (N. Y.: The McClure Co., 1907-08), II, 401.

- <sup>18</sup>Muenzenberger, 53.
- <sup>19</sup>Muenzenberger, 30, 32, 47; "Descriptive Book"; Jack McLaughlin, *Gettysburg: The Long Encampment* (N. Y.: Bonanza Books, 1963), 32; Bell I. Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank* (N. Y.: Grosset & Dunlap, 1952), 312.
- <sup>20</sup>Muenzenberger, 46-63.
- <sup>21</sup>David S. Sparks [ed.], *Inside Lincoln's Army* (N. Y.: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), 232; Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), II, 88.
- <sup>22</sup>Muenzenberger, 62.
- <sup>23</sup>Sandburg, II, 88; Darius N. Couch, "Summer's 'Right Grand Division,'" *Battles and Leaders*, III, 120; Kenneth A. Bernard, *Lincoln and the Music of the Civil War* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1966), 134.
- <sup>24</sup>Noah Brooks, *Washington in Lincoln's Time* (N. Y.: Rinehart & Company, 1958), 56.
- <sup>25</sup>Muenzenberger, 62.
- <sup>26</sup>Muenzenberger, 68.
- <sup>27</sup>Muenzenberger, 72; "The Battle of Chancellorsville," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, VII [No. 2], 9; Doerflinger, "Familiar History," 8; E. P. Alexander, *Military Memoirs of a Confederate* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 323; John Bigelow, Jr., *The Campaign of Chancellorsville* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1910), 187.
- <sup>28</sup>Bigelow, 288; Augustus Choate Hamlin, *The Battle of Chancellorsville* (Bangor: n. p., 1896), 144; *Official Records*, XXV, I, 652.
- <sup>29</sup>Bigelow, *passim*.
- <sup>30</sup>Schurz, II, 418.
- <sup>31</sup>Quiner, 748; Doerflinger papers; Doerflinger, "Familiar History," 3.
- <sup>32</sup>*Official Records*, XXV, I, 655.
- <sup>33</sup>*Official Records*, XXV, I, 667; "Field and Staff Rosters, Wisconsin National Guard," MS in Wisconsin Historical Society.
- <sup>34</sup>"Descriptive Book."
- <sup>35</sup>Schurz, II, 424; "Descriptive Book."
- <sup>36</sup>"Descriptive Book," Doerflinger, "Familiar History," 1-2, 8-9.
- <sup>37</sup>*Official Records*, XXV, I, 666-68.
- <sup>38</sup>Doerflinger, "Familiar History," 8; *Official Records*, XXV, I, 655.
- <sup>39</sup>*Official Records*, XXV, I, 183; William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War* (Albany: New York Historical Society, 1889), 28, 34; James H. Stine, *History of the Army of the Potomac* (Washington: Gibson Bros.), 396-408.
- <sup>40</sup>Muenzenberger, 81; Wickesberg, 15-16.
- <sup>41</sup>Bigelow, *passim*.
- <sup>42</sup>Muenzenberger, 91-92; Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard* (N. Y.: Baker & Taylor, 1907), 390.
- <sup>43</sup>Howard, 395; Muenzenberger, 97; *Official Records*, XXVII, I, 707.
- <sup>44</sup>Schurz, III, 4; Schlicher, 452.
- <sup>45</sup>Wickesberg, 19.
- <sup>46</sup>Wickesberg, 19; Theodore A. Dodge, "Left Wounded on the Field," *Putnam's Magazine*, IV (1869), 318-19.
- <sup>47</sup>Dodge, 319.
- <sup>48</sup>Frederick C. Winkler, "Winkler's Reminiscences of Frank Haskell," MS in U. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library.
- <sup>49</sup>Wittke, 229; Wilhelm Kaufmann, *Die Deutschen im Amerikanischen Bürgerkriege* (München und Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1911), 480.

<sup>50</sup>Charles K. Fox, *Gettysburg* (N. Y.: A. S. Barner & Co., 1969), 21; James S. Pula, "Na Polu Chwaly: The Life and Times of Wlodzimierz Krzyzanowski," Diss.: Purdue University, 1972, passim.

<sup>51</sup>Wlodzimierz Krzyzanowski, *Wspomnienia z Pobytu w Ameryce Podczas Wojny 1861-1864* (Chicago: Polish Museum of America), 79.

<sup>52</sup>Wickesberg, 19; Kaufmann, 514; Franz Huebschmann, Papers, MS in U. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library.

<sup>53</sup>Quiner, 752; Brooks, 64, Schurz, III, 56.

<sup>54</sup>*Official Records*, XXVII, I, 746-47.

<sup>55</sup>Schurz, III, 78; Quiner, 752; *Official Records*, XXXI, II, 382.

<sup>56</sup>*Official Records*, 383; Frederick Winkler, "Report on the 26th Wisconsin," MS in Love Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>57</sup>Krzyzanowski, 80; Winkler, Report; Quiner, 752; Schurz, III, 80, Wickesberg, 27; Joseph Tyler Butts [ed.], *A Gallant Captain of the Civil War* (N. Y.: F. Tennyson Neely, 1902), 102.

<sup>58</sup>"Descriptive Book."

<sup>59</sup>Wittke, 236-37; William Fox, 399; Frederick Phisterer, *Statistical Record of the Armies of the United States* (N. Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), 58.

<sup>60</sup>William Fox, 399; Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (N. Y.: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959), 1684.

<sup>61</sup>Kaufmann, 564-65; Edwin E. Bryant, "The Battle of Gettysburg," *MOLLUS-Wisconsin*, II, (1896), 242.

## FINSTRES TAL

Blumental

Dornental

Farbe und Duft

entflohn

finstres Tal

Furcht

Unglück

ich schrei

te hindurch

denn Dein

Stecken und Stab

trösten mich

CHRISTA K. DIXON

Philadelphia, Pa.