

*from*  
**DIARY OF A CONFEDERATE  
SOLDIER**  
**1862-1863**

----- *John S. Jackman* -----

John S. Jackman (1841–1912) was an enlistee in the First Kentucky Brigade of the Confederate Army of Tennessee. Better educated than most enlisted men, he kept a detailed diary that provides historians with rare descriptions of the western campaigns of the Confederate military forces. Jackman edited some of his diary himself after the war; his diary was later edited for publication in 1990.

**THINK THROUGH HISTORY : Recognizing Bias**

What factors should be considered in order to assess the accuracy of John S. Jackman's observations?

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*Dec. 31, 1862* The sun came up clear. The regiment had moved off before I waked up. Had breakfast. The ambulances and caissons are sheltered in our ravine. Just as the sun was coming up I heard a yelling over towards Withers' division, and ran up on the hill to see the cause. That division was charging across a big field in perfect line of battle, the men yelling and cheering. Soon the Federal batteries opened on them, then the musketry, and I could see his men falling. Presently they opened fire, and the line was obscured in smoke. This was, I believe, the grandest scene I ever witnessed, in the military line. I stood a moment watching the battle, and a stray shell came near cutting me down. Thinking the ball had now opened in earnest, I "buckled on my armor", and started for the regiment. One of the boys was with me. We had to pass over a long field in the rear of a battery, which was then being subject to a heavy fire. First, a shell would tear up the ground in front of us; then we would go a little slow; then a ball would plow up the ground in rear of us; then we would quicken our pace. When we got to the regiment, it was falling in to march out in rear of the battery, which was composed of twelve guns and on the hill where we skirmished the first evening. As soon as the regiment got to the proper place, a short distance from the guns, [we were] ordered to lie down. Our battery, or batteries, for there were three parked together, opened fire on the advancing columns, and the Federal guns replied, firing over the heads of their troops. I believe, there were 38 cannon playing on us at once. The hill protected us a little, yet I saw from my position, on the extreme left of the regiment, numbers of cannon balls strike just in front of the line, and skip over. We were not

behind the battery more than five minutes, for seeing the numbers that were being hurt, Gen'l Hanson had the regiment moved off a little to the right, out of range. In this, we lost about 20 or 30 wounded, but luckily no one killed. We did not move again during the day. Our company went to get in the trenches, by the guns, in the evening, but the order was countermanded, and it came back. Just before sundown, a cannon ball passed through Adj't. C. killing him instantly. I had just left his side, having been to him to get some tobacco. The day was cool, though the sun shown out all the time—cold wind from the North. Lying on the cold ground a good deal during the day, [I] was chilled, and when darkness put a stop to the stirring scenes, I went back to the ambulance station, to get by the fire. Dr. B gave me a "drink", and we spread down blankets together. Slept well.

*Thur. Jany. 1st, 1863.*—All quiet to-day. Both armies seem to be taking a "blowing spell," after the hard fighting yesterday. Turned my gun over to one of the infirmiry corps, they having to take arms.—

*Friday Jany 2d.*—Raining in the morning. Back at the ambulance train nearly all the time. All quiet until about 3 P.M., when Bragg ordered Breckinridges division to charge *over Stone River*, at Rosecranz' army! All the brigade went into the charge, save our regiment, which was left to support the batteries, and hold the hill, heretofore mentioned. The rain stopped just before the charge was made. Hanson killed.—

*Jany 3d.*—Rain pouring down all day long. At the regiment part of the time, helping dig in the entrenchment. Late in the evening, having "got wind" that the army was going [to] fall back that night, I went into town to see [his brother William] at Dr. S's. Soon after getting in town, the rain came down in torrents, and continued all night long. Went to the Medical Purveyor's office, and there found [William], Dr. S., and Dr. P., medical director of division. They had been on the field and had gotten things nice to eat and still had some on hand. Not having eaten any thing but "dough" for a week, I enjoyed a good supper. Wrote home, giving the letter to Dr. P. to mail, as he was to be left with the wounded. Troops marching back, through town all night. Slept with [William] before a huge fire in the office.

*Jany 4th.*—Up before daylight: The Dr. having a spare horse, I was to ride. We mounted just at daylight, and rode off through a pelting rain. All had left before the dawn. We overtook our regiment 5 miles from town, on the Manchester pike, acting as rear guard. Being mounted, Col. H. sent me ahead to turn back an ordnance wagon....In riding by the infantry, sometimes I would splatter mud on them, and often expected to be bayoneted. In the after part of the day the sun came out hot. Evening came up with the wagon train, camped near Manchester. Not having been on horseback for so long, this ride of 30 miles tired me almost as much as if I had walked.

*Jany. 5th.*—The wagon train started on for Tullahoma. Got five, or 6 miles on the road, and ordered back to Manchester, where arrived after dark. Raining

after night. Slept with [William] on a pile of hospital comforts, which caught fire and could hardly be put out.

*Jany. 6th.*—In the morning the regiment came up. The train being again ordered towards Tullahoma, I kept with it on “my horse.” When we got as far as we did before, the wagons of our regiment were ordered back to Manchester....Just after dark we found the regiment in camp near town. I dismounted and resigned my steed to the Dr. That night my Mess did not put up the tent—we slept on it. Late at night I waked up with something heavy on my face. I found it to be an old gander, quietly roosting on my head, which some of the boys had brought into camp—I presume he saw that I had no feathers under my head, and concluded to put some on top, instead of underneath. I thanked him, by flinging him against a stump, hardby.

Now commences another long siege of inaction. Nothing much to vary one day from another—a routine of camp duty, from one weeks end to another....

Source: *Diary of a Confederate Soldier: John S. Jackman of the Orphan Brigade*, edited by William C. Davis (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 69–71.

**THINK THROUGH HISTORY : ANSWER**

Several factors should be considered when assessing the accuracy of Jackman's observations. Jackman writes in more detail about times when the regiment was moving or in battle and very little about more ordinary details of camp life. Jackman's unemotional tone makes his account of the December 31st battle believable. It is important that he focuses more on recording events than on offering opinions in the diary entries. Also of note is that these diaries were edited by Jackman himself and later by others before being published in their current form.