

The Camp, the Battle Field, and the Hospital

By Linus Pierpont Brocket

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A GOOD USE OF ROMAN CANDLES.

The construction of the firework called the Roman candle is known to most of our readers, and the fact is familiar that when fired they project, in succession, and at intervals of about three seconds, a number of brilliantly luminous balls. These balls are thrown many feet, and cast a clear light for two or three seconds.

We doubt whether the military use of the candles we instance has ever before been made:

At the siege of Knoxville, the enemy attempted to storm before daylight one of the forts—we have forgotten the name, but it was the one before which the "wires which so conveniently tripped up the enemy were arranged. In this fort was stationed Lieutenant Charles Herzog, of the Signal Corps, and as a part of his equipment, he was furnished with twenty or thirty Roman candles, containing about twelve balls each. When used as signals, the candles are fired vertically, and the balls are visible at a great distance.

The lieutenant knew of this use of his candles, but it needed the inspiration of battle to develop the other. He had it. Before dawn, one day, the pickets were driven in, and the enemy was swarming after them. They came on over a crest about eight hundred yards distant, and our great guns opened, but the aim was wild—there was need of light. Light there must be, or the heavy masses thronging up to the work would sweep its parapet, and the day was lost. Then came the inspiration. At the first alarm the faithful officer had sent his signal-balls whirling into the air, announcing the alarm to every distant station. With the gleam of its balls an idea gleamed upon him. His action, as it, was instant. Putting his match to another candle, he aimed it fairly over the heads of the enemy, and as they came closing up, the sparkling balls, hanging over them, revealed to Johnny Reb not only that there was to be no surprise of that fort, but that his own dark ways were to be lighted. The experiment was a success. The great crowd of charging rebels stood out in fair relief in the glare—the distance had lessened to about three hundred yards—and our pieces, crammed with canister, opened on a mark perhaps as good as could have been had by daylight—only the light was not continuous. The staunch lieutenant did not fail in expedients. He sent half his candles by one of his assistants to the opposite angle of the fort, and then they opened fire together, crossing fire above and in front of the enemy. Now a ball was in the air all the time. Those who have seen batteries of Roman candles at displays of fireworks, can appreciate the effect. It puzzled the enemy, and it amazed them; many of the wild white trash had never seen a Roman candle; how could they tell but these were some infernal explosions of "Yankee device?" It lighted up all the ground to the very edge of the ditch, and musketry and cannon shot swept into their ranks in storms. That they came on and bravely, we know, and that they left in front of the work, more in dead and wounded, by almost twice, than its garrison. It was useless. They were fairly and thoroughly whipped. In twenty minutes all was over, and the last of Herzog's candles lighted up a completely baffled enemy.