# Confederate Veteran.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY IN THE INTEREST OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS AND KINDRED TOPICS.

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*OFFICIALLY REPRESENTS:*
UNITED CONFEDERATE VETERANS,
UNITED DAUGHTERS OF THE CONFEDERACY,
SONS OF VETERANS, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.
The VETERAN is approved and indorsed officially by a larger and more elevated patronage, doubtless, than any other publication in existence.

The "civil war" was too long ago to be called the "late" war, and when correspondents use that term the word "great" (war) will be substituted.

Though men deserve, they may not win success,
The brave will honor the brave, vanquished none the less.

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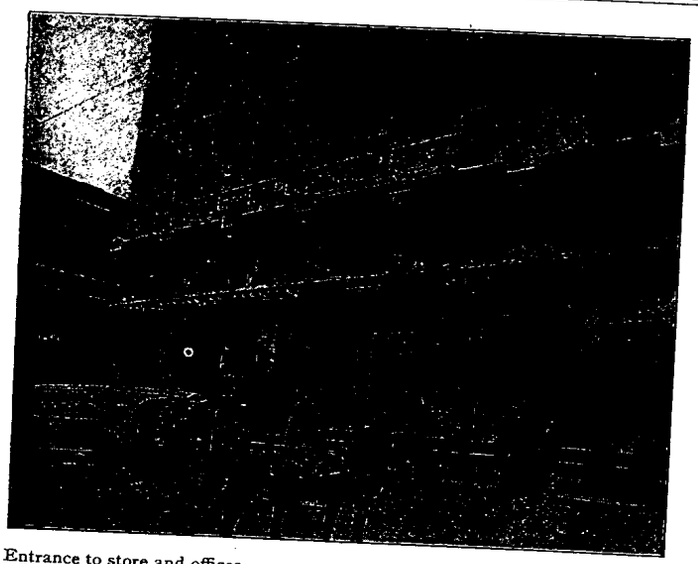

Entrance to store and offices. Entrance to VETERAN office.
METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE, N. E. CORNER PUBLIC SQUARE.

Read the review of the VETERAN on editorial page 544. Let every friend of the publication consider the benefit of united coöperation, and don't let "hard times" nor personal misfortune interfere with that interest. If on any account your subscription must be discontinued, find some one to take the place, so that instead of holding to 20,000 as the issue you may help to make it 50,000. Interested persons can easily do that during the coming month. With such coöperation the VETERAN might be eminently the first magazine of the country. It has already the most devoted patronage, and with such a new "send off" there would be an increased respect for the cause it represents, which would be of greater influence than can be readily conceived. Veterans have ever been faithful, the Daughters are advancing in power and influence amazingly, and plans are proposed for their coöperation that promise great results; while the Sons of Veterans are organizing better than ever, and during the coming year they will take more pride than ever in their eligibility to membership. See article from ex-Commander in Chief R. A. Smyth. Let all others do their part, and the VETERAN will likewise contribute to the honor of the noble men and women of the sixties and what they have done since, all that its management possibly can. Let the one sentiment, "Our VETERAN," take hold of every Southern patriot.

In forging to the front with this issue, in the sincerest hope that the advance on day of publication will continue to improve, many omissions have been necessary. They include reports from State conventions of Veterans, proceedings of divisions and chapters of U. D. C., and determined advance of Sons in their organizations. These could not be avoided, and, what is most deplored, delay of many tributes to our noble and sacred dead. Among articles promised for this month and necessarily omitted "Afloat — Afield — Afloat" is mentioned.

There is so much requiring space that plea is made to contributors to condense, so as to give most of truth in least space. Don't forget that important fact.

Review of Sam Davis's career is given because of demand for back copies that cannot be supplied, and because that subject will be a topic of deepened interest until the proposed monument shall stand on the superbly beautiful hill, surmounted by the handsome stone Capitol building of his native Tennessee. The State Legislature designated a committee of prominent and mainly venerable men to take charge of the fund and erect the monument. They are expected to organize before this VETERAN will have been read, and friends everywhere will be kept posted each month as to the progress made. The Sam Davis Calendar for 1900 has been issued by the VETERAN, and will be sent to all who remit for a year's subscription or more during January. A small volume may be expected during the coming year at a small price, which will contain account of Sam Davis's life and the names of all who contributed $1 or over to the monument fund. The little calendar is very neat, and will be sent free with every subscription, if requested, until supply is exhausted.

## ORGANIZING A SIGNAL CORPS.

BY THE LATE W. N. MERCER OTEY, SAN FRANCISCO.

Sorrowfully I bade good-by to my comrades of the Rockbridge Batttery, for I felt it was farewell forever to many. I laughingly reminded Capt. McLaughlin that I should be unable to stand those ten turns of extra guard duty for my Frederick City escapade, and started to foot it to Lexington, over one hundred miles up the valley, where I knew loving hearts and willing hands awaited me. While in Frederick City I was presented with a pair of fine boots that had hardly been off my feet since I put them on. After the first day out from Winchester I came to a beautiful stream of cool running water that looked so inviting I could not resist the temptation of refreshing my feet by a half hour or more of soaking. It was delicious while it lasted, but alas! I had not thought it would terminate so unfortunately. When I had rested sufficiently long I found to my dismay my feet had so swollen I could not possibly get on my boots. They refused to yield. Here was a pretty pickle! Several score of miles of a macadamized pike to traverse with naked feet! So off I started with boots tied together and swung over my shoulders.

When I reached Staunton my feet were badly cut and bleeding from the flinty pike. I had no money, and felt unequal to footing forty miles more in my condition. I had an officer's revolver that I had brought from Tennessee; this might aid me. I went to the proprietor of the American Hotel, where was also the stage office, and a bargain was struck. He allowed me $40 for my pistol in exchange for supper, lodging, breakfast, and a seat on the stage to Lexington.

A rest of three weeks, and I turned my face for the Army of Tennessee, where I reported for duty to Gen. Polk, at Murfreesboro. Here I found an order from the Secretary of War, James A. Siddon, authorizing me to organize a signal corps, with a carte blanche to detail any man from any branch of the service who might be found eligible for so important duty. Great care had to be exercised in selecting the men; they must be bright, intelligent, and, as far as possible, acquainted with the country topographically.

Many complaints were made by regimental commanders when they were called upon to detail their best men. In a short time I had around me as fine a body of bright and brave fellows as I ever saw. A few weeks' practice made them proficient in the signal code, and the flags from mountain peak by day and the torch by night soon demonstrated their utility in transmitting intelligence that could be accomplished by no other method than the slow and tedious one of couriers.

It could not be expected but that some would be found to criticise and condemn any innovation. One of Gen. Bragg's staff I remember as particularly hypercritical. Col. Oladowski, Chief of Ordance to the commanding general, was a gallant old-school soldier of Poland, who had cast his fortunes with our cause. He dubbed us the "flip-flops," on account of the movement of the flags when signaling according to the Morse code, so many flag waves to right and left designating dots and dashes for letters of the alphabet. One day he was standing near a group of officers while I was a few steps distant sending a message to a station some miles away on a mountain top. "Ah!" he says, "watch those flip-flops; they go dis way three times and dat way three times (imitating the flag with his handkerchief), and de lieutenant he say now, darn you, you get on your horse and ride to that man on de mountain and tell him what I say!"

Of course the efficiency of this service depends upon the topography of the country, and little benefit can be derived in a low, flat field, but in a hilly or mountainous country it is very efficient.

It was while stationed at Murfreesboro, Tenn., in the first week of December that Gen. John Morgan captured a brigade of Federal infantry at Hartsville, commanded by Gen. Willich (?), and marched them to Murfreesboro to be paroled. Among the number that I attended was a lieutenant colonel who was badly wounded. He seemed very much gratified at his treatment, and desired to express it to me in a more substantial manner than words. As he would shortly be sent North, with little or no probability of being fit for field duty, I finally accepted the gift of a fine pair of cavalry boots that just fitted, and which proved of great service for many months. I used to sit with him and chat about where he had been, etc. I related to him an experience that befell the Twenty-Second Indiana at the battle of Perryville, Ky., October 8, and with whose Lieut. Col. Tanner Gen. Polk had such a queer experience, and which I had heard Gen. Polk relate as one of the narrow escapes of his life and was as follows in substance: It was quite late, and the dusk of evening had commenced to gather so as to render objects at a little distance off quite difficult to recognize. Gen. Polk was quite in doubt as to the identity of a body of troops that were firing fiercely into our lines on the left. His personal staff was away on other parts of the field, when, riding up to my brother-in-law, Gen. Govan, commanding a brigade of Arkansians, he remarked that he thought he was firing on our own troops across in the woods in front of him. Govan said, no, he thought it was the enemy; so, commanding him to hold his fire until he could reconnoiter, he started off on his faithful old roan, Jerry, to investigate for himself. Fortunately, his gray uniform was concealed by a linen duster, and, favored by the gathering gloom, he rode to the officer standing a little to the right of the line and inquired: "What troops are these?" Promptly the officer replied: "The Twenty-Second Indiana, Lieut. Col. Tanner commanding!" Gen. Polk was staggered only for a second, when he at once replied: "Colonel, cease firing; don't you see you are firing into your own troops over there?" pointing to Govan's Brigade. "But who are you that gives this order?" inquires the Colonel. Bending over his horse's neck, he seized the Colonel roughly by the shoulder and remarked in his imperative manner: "Cease firing this instant, sir, or I will have you arrested and court-martialed for disobedience of orders in the enemy's front!" This so staggered the Colonel that he instantly gave the order: "Cease firing!" Gen. Polk then, with remarkable presence of mind, rode slowly down the line of the regiment till he gradually zigzagged his way back to his own lines, when, approaching Gen. Govan, he cheerfully remarked: "General, I've reconnoitered those fellows over there. They are the enemy. Give it to them." Subsequent reports state that the command was nearly decimated.

I once asked the General how he felt when he was riding down the line of that Indiana regiment. "Well, my son, I felt like a thousand centipeds were traveling up and down my backbone." He was ever a fearless commander, and seemed to bear a charmed life, going wherever duty called, though often remonstrated with by his staff for unnecessarily exposing himself. When looking back after the lapse of years, I am more than ever impressed with his magnificent Christian character. A graduate of West Point, his father had intended him for the army, but his predilections carried him into the ministry, where his preëminent qualities placed him at the head of the diocese of Louisiana as its bishop. 'Tis sad to think that his end was so sudden and that he fell in that manner that all during his life he had prayed to avert: "From battle and murder and from *sudden death*, good Lord, deliver us!"

Within eighteen months thereafter, June 12, 1864, a solid shot tore through the body of this grand character, this noble Christian, and on Pine Mountain, in Georgia, he gave up his life for duty and principle.

I was particularly endeared to Gen. Polk. Our families were closely associated all their lives, and I felt that the tie binding me to him was more than an ordinary one. He and my father had spent the best years of their lives in the service of their Master, and had devoted their time and talents to educational purposes of the South in a marked degree, leaving behind them a monument in the University of the South at Sewanee that will live long after them and their posterity.

Our sojourn at Murfreesboro was brief, as Rosecrans was rapidly concentrating his army at Nashville for an onward movement. I kept very accurately informed of Gen. Rosecrans's movements through two of my signal men that visited Nashville almost daily, and as fast as information reached me the same was promptly furnished headquarters. These young men, coming and going into Nashville, were born and raised there, and knew not only the people generally, but were familiar with every hog trail and sheep track, so that they found little or no difficulty in their ingress or egress.

It was just about this time that they brought information that the Federals had captured two officers, Capt. Orton Williams and Lieut. Peters, and they had been tried as spies and condemned to be hung at Franklin. Williams was highly connected with one of that name in the United States War Department, and friends of influence interested themselves in his and young Peters's behalf, but to no purpose. They were promptly executed.

Gen. John. A. Wharton was actively engaged with his celebrated Texans in scouting and scouring the country under that indefatigable and dashing cavalry commander, Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler, who, when Rosecrans began his advance on December 26, gained his rear, and, destroying several hundreds of wagons loaded with supplies and baggage, and having made the circuit of the army, rejoined our army on the left. I was ordered out to Triune one morning, bearing dispatches to Gen. Wharton, then guarding our front on the Nolensville pike. It was Christmas day, and the General was extending the hospitality of the occasion through a large bowl of eggnog presided over by that genial Texan, Capt. Dave Terry, ably assisted by Royston, Botts, and others of Wharton's military family. An hour spent in such genial company, and I retraced my steps through a blinding snowstorm to headquarters.

December 31 found us in line of battle about two miles from Murfreesboro, stretching transversely across Stone River. The left wing of our army was commanded by Gen. Polk, whose headquarters had been established at a large frame dwelling standing on a conspicuous eminence that commanded a fine view of the field of battle. As Rosecrans seemed disinclined to commence the attack on the 30th, orders were given Maj. Gen. Frank Cheatham to engage the enemy early on the morning of the 31st, which was promptly done. The ground immediately in front of our headquarters was an open field extending for a half mile to the Nashville pike; the country lying north was densely covered with a cedar growth that made the progress of the troops slow and difficult. When the battle had fairly begun the enemy realized that we had made a stand for a general engagement. It seems that in all previous fights, by a singular coincidence, Cheatham's Division happened to always have in its immediate front that Federal division commanded by Maj. Gen. Alex McD. McCook. On this occasion among the first prisoners captured and carried to division headquarters were some of Cheatham's men. McCook had not completed his morning toilet nor his breakfast. With his face half-shaved, he asked of the prisoners before him: "Whose command do you belong to, boys?" Instantly they answered: "Frank Cheatham's, sir!" Dropping his razor, and with the shave unfinished, McCook dashed to the front, for he knew that he had his hands full and that hot work was ahead of him. Stubbornly all day the Federals contested every inch of ground, while slowly but surely we forced back their right wing to a right angle of their first line of battle beyond the Nashville pike.

During the earlier part of that morning Gen. Polk, to utilize when practicable for a charge a portion of the ground in his front, sent his aid-de-camp, Col. William B. Richmond, ordering the regiment of infantry to pull down a rail fence which was an obstruction to the movement of the troops. Col. Richmond rode to the officer in command, Col. Stanton, of the Twenty-Fifth Tennessee Infantry, and transmitted the order. Some words passed that led to blows, and though the bullets were flying thick and fast, here was seen the ludicrous spectacle of two officers engaged in a personal fight on the battlefield. Stanton had got Richmond's thumb in his mouth, while Richmond was gnawing away at Stanton's ear. Finally wiser counsel prevailed, and the interference of friends parted the belligerents, when they at once resumed their respective posts of duty.

During the heavy fighting in a sedge field a scared rabbit jumped from its hiding place, and with its little white tail elevated scampered to the rear, while a long, lean Georgian paused in firing and loading, gazed wistfully at the little animal, sadly remarked: "Go it, Molly Cottontail, go it! I'd run too if I didn't have a reputation to sustain." [Zeb Vance has been accorded authorship of this story.—Editor Veteran.]

The night of the 30th closed with every advantage in our favor. The weather was intensely cold, and the wounded suffered greatly. Night, however, gave

needed rest and opportunity for rival commanders to take stock of the day's loss and gain and reëstablish their shattered lines.

The morning of the 31st opened with the sharp crack of the skirmish line, gradually feeling the way to the regular line of battle. The old Cowan house, standing on the south side of the Nashville pike, made a splendid retreat for a body of the enemy's sharpshooters. It was located halfway between the surging lines, and if possible, had to be destroyed. A charge was made for it by our troops, and in a few minutes we saw the smoke curling, then the forked tongues of flames leaping from window and roof that soon rendered it untenable. Rosecrans was thundering a hundred guns from where his chief of artillery had judiciously massed his batteries, and made great gaps in our lines. Capt. W. W. Carnes was out in an old corn field, and fought stubbornly against odds too great to warrant such a sacrifice. Gen. Polk, with a quick glance, took in the peril of the position, for we had no batteries to lose. I was directed to the brigade commander with orders to have Carnes's Battery withdrawn.

During this fierce cannonading the supporting brigade had taken advantage of the protecting banks afforded by Stone River for a breathing spell until the moment should arrive to charge that little cedar knoll and clear from their front those annoying guns. A perfect hail of grape and canister swept over that old corn field. Could I get to the brigade commander ere it was too late? Would horse and rider run the gantlet of that iron-sheeted field. As fast as my little black mare could travel I rode over the ground. I seemed to fly through space. The half mile was covered and my order delivered to the brigadier, who looked in vain for some of his staff to send out to Carnes, a quarter of a mile in his front, with the order to "limber up and retire;" but not an aid even was present. Turning to me disconsolately, he requested that I just ride out and so instruct the artillery officer, as none of his staff were available. I reminded him that my duty ceased when I had delivered my general's order, and, turning my little mare's head for the race homewards to headquarters, I soon saluted my chief with the report that his orders had been delivered. Impatiently I watched the result, to be soon gratified by the sight of a horseman dashing furiously for the battery, and later to see it safely withdrawn—the general of the brigade had delivered his order in person and had returned in safety.

The heavy firing on our right soon told of the dreadful carnage raging there under Breckinridge and Hanson, with their gallant Kentuckians, who forced the charging columns of fearless Federals across Stone River with a terrible loss.

From one of the officers we captured we learned that Gen. Rosecrans's chief of staff, Col. Jules P. Garesché, had his head taken off by one f our cannon shots while riding by the side of his chief. He was of one of the old French families of St. Louis, and was universally admired and esteemed for the qualities that make the gentleman.

Night found us victors, with over 6,000 prisoners, thirty pieces of artillery, 6,000 small arms, a number of ambulances, horses and mules, and a large amount of other property, the result of the engagements of the past few days. There was a doubt in the minds of Gens. Bragg and Rosecrans as to which had been victorious, and each was retreating from the other after the close of the battle. Soon Gen. Rosecrans made the important discovery, and, turning his rear guard into the vanguard, permitted us to withdraw unmolested to Shelbyville, some twenty miles farther South. Here we rested and recruited our army for some months, until the enemy, having also recovered from the staggering blows of Stone River, once more began an advance that gradually forced our retirement to Tullahoma.

(To Be Continued.)

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Comrade A. C. Oxford, of Birmingham, Ala., is so popular that it is said no man, woman, or child knows him who doesn't love him. The VETERAN could not claim a more constant, zealous, and unselfish advocate.

MAJ. A. C. OXFORD.

In much valuable service rendered it through the past seven years not a penny in remuneration has ever been accepted. As a citizen and Confederate Veteran he merits the esteem he possesses. Comrade Oxford enlisted at Columbus, Miss., in the Pope-Walker Battalion of Cavalry. He served during the entire war, and was paroled at Columbus, Ga. His battalion belonged to Gen. Wheeler's command, and in the battle of Shiloh Wheeler commanded, as colonel, the Nineteenth Alabama. Soon after that he reorganized the cavalry of the Tennessee Army, and the Pope-Walker Battalion was made a part of the Eighth Confederate Cavalry. Comrade Oxford is now Corresponding Secretary of Camp Hardee, of Birmingham, and also holds position on Gen. George P. Harrison's staff, with the rank of major. Soon after the Charleston reunion he was stricken with paralysis, but is now much improved.