

orders or directions from any officer but my division commander, General McLaws. I requested not to be relieved that night, and remained in that position until the evacuation of Fredericksburg by the Union forces. These facts were officially reported at the time, and were then too well known to be the subject of mistake.

*J. B. Kershaw.*

CAMDEN, S. C., Dec. 6, 1887.

#### The Last Victim of the War.

TO THE traveler on the old Walnut Hills road, Cincinnati, at noon, May 11, 1865, an unwonted spectacle presented itself. To the south of the road along the ravine near by stood, in solemn silence, a regiment of soldiers facing the road, the companies at each wing at right angles, forming a hollow square. Within this, near the left, stood a squad of soldiers, arms at the shoulder, bearing upon the breast of a youth kneeling erect beside his coffin and facing them at eight paces, with hands unbound and tremorless at his side, and eyes bandaged with a white handkerchief. At the word of command the guns were fired and the youth fell dead.

Thus perished Thomas Martin, the last victim of the great civil war. The war was over, Lee had surrendered, Richmond had been taken, Johnston had yielded, Davis had been captured. Federal and Confederate, the blue and the gray, were fraternizing everywhere save in that lonely ravine, within the corporate limits of Cincinnati, where was being transacted the most revolting deed of war — the deliberate killing by overwhelming power of an unresisting human being.

Few of the citizens of Cincinnati were aware of the tragedy at the time; and how few now, as they read this narrative, will recall it. We are living in a time of reminiscences, and the history of this poor Confederate soldier may have its lesson.

Nearly a year before this execution, its victim, a native of Kentucky, had been captured in that State and brought to Cincinnati as a prisoner; there he had been brought before a court-martial upon the charge of being a guerrilla, and had been convicted and sentenced to be shot. He was a mere boy, quite illiterate, unable to read or write: he claimed that he was a regular Confederate soldier, and evidently the distinction between such a soldier and a guerrilla was beyond his knowledge.

At the time this sentence was rendered, no one expected it would be carried into execution. No member of the court, and certainly the military commandant of the city, General August Willich, did not. The sentence had been rendered for its deterrent effect upon the guerrillas in Kentucky. So little did General Willich think the sentence would be executed that he gave the boy his liberty, the freedom of the city, using him as a sort of orderly; and in his intercourse with him he became attached to him. Time passed; and the day when General Hooker would leave the department, of which he had had command since General Sherman's action retired him from the front, was approaching.

In an evil moment for the victim, General Hooker, in the first days of May, 1865, asked an aide to read over the papers on file in the department, so that he might dispose of them. In so doing, the papers relating to this boy were found. The general had forgotten the case. He inquired whether sentence had been executed. Learning that it had not, he sent for General

Willich, his subordinate, and asked for the facts. General Willich stated them as above given. Next day, he received an order from General Hooker directing him to shoot the boy on the 5th of May, then only a few days off. General Willich was dumfounded. To shoot the boy who had been his attendant for nearly a year, and whom he had respected for his faithful conduct, was too much for the stern old soldier of many years and many wars. With tears in his eyes he rushed to Judge Stallo, now our minister at Rome, and besought his interference. Judge Stallo, in turn, came to me and solicited my aid.

Meanwhile General Hooker had left the city to attend the funeral of Mr. Lincoln at Springfield. Therefore I could not reach him. At my request, Mr. Gaither, then Superintendent of Adams Express Company, sent a telegram to Major Eckert to be laid before Mr. Stanton, requesting his intervention. But no order came, and preparations were made for the execution.

The boy was dressed for death. The priest, Father Garesché, brother to General Rosecrans's chief of staff, — who fell at Stone's River, — attended him. The mournful procession took its way to the ravine, yet General Willich moved slowly, hoping the order for suspension would be received. He left a mounted orderly to wait until the last moment for a telegram from Stanton. Anxiously, imploringly, he looked back for his messenger. At length, to his great joy, in the distance he saw him coming at full speed, holding in his outstretched hand a paper. It was this telegram:

WAR DEPARTMENT,

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 5, 1865.

MAJOR-GENERAL JOSEPH HOOKER: Suspend the execution of Thomas Martin, to be executed in Cincinnati this day, until further orders.

By order of the President.

E. M. STANTON, *Secretary of War.*

Great was the rejoicing. The soldiers who were to shoot the boy now congratulated him on his escape, and all returned to the city. Alas, how short-lived was this joy!

It had been my purpose to advise General Hooker, on his return, of what I had done; but my first knowledge of this was from an aide of his, who delivered a note from the general requesting my presence at his headquarters.

The moment I saw Hooker, I discovered that he was under great excitement, which he was striving to suppress, and in this effort he fairly succeeded. He did not look me full in the face, but sat sideways, looking obliquely, ever and anon casting upon me furtive glances. In slow and measured tones, he said:

"Judge Dickson, I was very angry at you on my return and had ordered your arrest; but reconsidered it, and am now more composed."

"Why, you surprise me, General! What is the matter?"

"Why, sir, on my return to the city I found my administration of this department had been interfered with; that Martin, whom I had ordered shot, had not been shot; that Mr. Stanton had suspended my order. I immediately telegraphed him, demanding why he interfered. He replied that it was in response to the Gaither telegram — your work. I demanded of him to send me a copy of this telegram, which he did. Oh, yes, sir! I have got it. I know all you did."

"Well, General, was it not all right?"

"No, sir; it was not right. No, sir. Why, sir, when I was in command of the Army of the Potomac, Lincoln would not let me kill a man. Lee killed men every day, and Lee's army was under discipline; and now, sir, Lincoln is dead, and I will kill this man. Yes, sir, I will. The order is given to shoot him to-morrow, and he will be shot; and don't you interfere."

"Did Stanton order you to shoot him?" I inquired.

"No, sir. He left the matter in my hands, and I demanded that he be shot—and shot he will be."

"Well, General," I again interposed, "this boy was only a guerrilla. The war is over. He belonged to Colonel Jesse's command. The papers of this morning tell us that the Government has given Jesse the same terms given Lee; that he is now in Louisville, where he has been feasted and fraternized with by Union officers. Will it not be shocking to shoot here one of his deluded followers?"

"It makes no difference," replied the general. "Louisville is not in my department. I am not responsible for what is done there. I will do my duty in my own. I will kill him. Yes, sir, I will; and that to-morrow."

The image of the speaker rises before me with startling distinctness. The manner as well as the words indicated that his mind was oppressed with the thought that Lincoln's humanity had thwarted his career. In some way it seemed to him a relief to sacrifice this boy. Hence his eagerness that the opportunity should not escape him.

As I gazed upon the man the uppermost thought in my mind was, not the brutality of his act, nor yet pity for the fated youth,—though these thoughts were not absent,—but simple amazement that such a man, only a few months before, in a supreme crisis, should have held in the hollow of his hand, as it were, the fate of this mighty nation.

But why revive these harrowing incidents of the war? As well ask, Why tell the story of the war at all? If it is to be told, let us have the whole. Let the young not be misled; the dread reality has something else than the pomp and circumstance, however glorious. Besides, there will be other wars and other generals. Let these remember that an abuse of power will sooner or later rise up in judgment against them.

*W. M. Dickson.*

#### Hooker on the Chancellorsville Campaign.

[THE subjoined letter has been kindly furnished to us for publication by Lieutenant Worth G. Ross, son of the late Colonel Samuel Ross, to whom it is addressed. It is believed that it has not before been printed.—EDITOR.]

LOOKOUT VALLEY, TENN., Feb. 28, 1864.

MY DEAR COLONEL: For some reason your letter was a long time in reaching me. When the Eleventh Corps gave way on Saturday, Berry's division and Hays's brigade were dispatched to seize and hold the ground occupied by the left of that corps. Berry double-quickened his men to the point, but was too late. The enemy were already in possession. When this was reported to me I directed my engineers to establish a new line, which was pointed out to them on the map, and at the same time stated to them that we would

probably have to move on it as soon as the enemy opened on us in the morning, as his batteries would sweep the plain in front of the Chancellorsville House, and, besides, enfilade the line held by the Second and Twelfth Corps nearly its entire length. Soon after these instructions were given to the engineers, peremptory orders were sent to General Sedgwick to advance over the plank road from Fredericksburg and attack the enemy in front of the Second and Twelfth Corps at daylight. My single object in holding on to the position as long as I did was to hear Sedgwick's guns, which I momentarily expected, of course. General Warren had been sent to guide him. The orders reached him between 10 and 11 o'clock, [he] had but eight miles to march, a bright moonlight night, with only a small force to oppose. Probably had he marched as directed, not a gun would have been fired. With Lee in my front and Jackson on my flank I was unwilling to attempt to force my way through Lee, especially as the roads through the forests would only enable me to present my columns with narrow fronts, which the enemy could cut down as fast as they were exposed. I knew that I could do this, and I gave the enemy credit for being able to do as much as I could, but no more. Had Sedgwick come up on Lee's rear, the latter would have found himself between two armies, and would doubtless have followed Jackson's flank movement, which I desired, as that would throw the enemy off the short road to Richmond and our troops on it. I do not know that you ever heard that I had one and a half millions of rations afloat in the Potomac to throw up the Pamunkey River in view of this contingency.

I recrossed the Rappahannock, expecting to return at or near Franklin's Crossing, where I had elbow room, and at least an even chance for being victorious, and so stated to the President at the time. No general battle was fought at Chancellorsville, for I was unwilling to give battle with such great odds against me. I rejoice that what was not gained was not lost.

We lost no honors at Chancellorsville. With all of our misfortunes the enemies' loss exceeded our own by one-third. Of this I have abundant evidence in the official returns of the enemies' casualties, as they have from time to time been published. If I did not cross the river again it will appear that it was for reasons over which I had no control. The rains had nothing to do with our returning from Chancellorsville, for it had been determined on in my mind long before the rain commenced falling. I do not like to be quoted as authority on this subject until after the official report is published, and for the flattering terms in which you speak of me—*not ever*. I hope that you and yours are well. My kindest regards to Mrs. Ross and my best wishes for yourself.

Your friend,  
JOSEPH HOOKER.

COLONEL SAMUEL ROSS,  
*Commanding Brigade, Twelfth Corps.*

#### Erratum.

A TYPOGRAPHICAL error in General Sherman's "Grand Strategy of the Civil War," in the February number, gave General Thomas's loss at Nashville as 305 instead of 3057 (revised compilation).