

MEMORANDA ON THE CIVIL WAR.

Southern Cadets in Action.

IN his sketch of "The West Point of the Confederacy," published in *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE* for January, 1889, Mr. John S. Wise says: "At a later period of the war it [the Virginia Military Institute] had, I believe, the exceptional honor of having sent its corps of cadets, as a body, into battle." The cadets of the University of Alabama share with the Virginia Military Institute corps the honor of having received "a baptism of fire" in the closing days of the war.¹ In fact, from the thoroughness of its military organization and equipment, and from the number and quality of the officers it furnished the Southern army, the University of Alabama may fairly contest with the Virginia Institute the honor of having been the "West Point of the Confederacy."

Unlike the Virginia Military Institute, the University of Alabama was not founded as a military school; but the legislature of the State, at its session of 1859-60, probably in anticipation of the "irrepressible conflict" between the sections, took steps towards grafting a military department on the classical and scientific courses of the institution, and in September, 1860, its students for the first time went into camp on the college grounds as a military body under the name of the Alabama Corps of Cadets. Colonel Caleb Huse, now in charge of a training school for West Point at Highland Falls, N. Y., who was then a young army officer, was detailed as commandant of cadets, and under his direction the corps soon reached a high degree of excellence in drill and discipline. At the outbreak of the war Colonel Huse resigned his commission in the army and accepted an important post under the Confederate Government. Colonel J. T. Murfee, an accomplished officer and a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, succeeded Colonel Huse as commandant, and he was aided in perfecting the organization of the military department of the institution by a complement of young officers known as "State Captains," most of whom were also Virginia Military Institute graduates.

As the war became more and more an earnest reality the University of Alabama assumed more and more the aspects of a second West Point. The president, Dr. L. C. Garland, now the venerable chancellor of the Vanderbilt University, donned the regulation gray of a Confederate colonel, and held reviews, inspections, etc., with the soldierly precision of a West Point superintendent. From time to time the young men whom the University had trained to the profession of arms were commissioned as officers in the Southern army, and of these quite a number rose rapidly in rank; one

of them, the lamented General John C. Saunders, having won the stars of a brigadier before he had reached his majority.

The university, being located at Tuscaloosa, in the interior of the State, was for a long time exempt from danger from the raiders who ravaged the northern borders of Alabama; but as the crisis drew on in the spring of 1865 the Federal troops came nearer and nearer. On the 30th of March, General E. M. McCook, then at Elyton (at present a suburb of the new city of Birmingham), fifty miles northeast of Tuscaloosa, acting under orders from General J. H. Wilson, detached Brigadier-General John T. Croxton and his brigade of fifteen hundred veteran cavalry with orders "to proceed rapidly by the most direct route to Tuscaloosa, to destroy the bridge, factories, mills, university (military school), and whatever else might be of benefit to the rebel cause."

The opportunity was now at hand for the cadet corps to taste the realities of war that it had so often mimicked in the marching and countermarching of the battalion manœuvres. The corps was about three hundred strong and was in fine trim. On the night of the 3d of April "taps" was sounded as usual. The cadets went to bed with little thought that within three miles, just across the Black Warrior River, lay Croxton's raiders, ready to make a dash across the bridge into Tuscaloosa. The Federal general, by his capture of scouts and citizens, had prevented knowledge of his approach. The surprise was complete. For the sake of form, a few of the "home guard"—old men and boys—had been kept at the bridge that night; but no one had an idea that the Federals were near. When their approach was discovered, a courier was at once dispatched to the university. The long roll was sounded, and in a few moments the cadet battalion was formed and hurried away in the darkness to the brow of the hill overlooking the bridge. There a line of battle was formed.

It was too late. Croxton's men had already crossed the bridge and were formed on the river bank. The cadets, however, were eager for the fray, and the two or three volleys that they poured down the hill for a while disconcerted the Federals and checked their advance. There was rapid firing for a short time on both sides; but, owing probably to the darkness of the night, the casualties were few. The officer in charge of the cadets, seeing the hopelessness of an attempt to dislodge a force so superior in numbers, drew off his command, having sustained a loss of only three or four wounded.

General Croxton, in his official report, makes no mention of the losses sustained by the Federals. He says: "They [the militia and cadets] made several unsuccessful attempts to dislodge us, but failed, and morning found us in peaceful possession of the premises, with sixty prisoners and three pieces of artillery." The prisoners referred to were members of the "home guard," and not cadets. The three pieces of artillery

¹ In a communication published in the "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," Lieutenant James Oates, of the 9th Illinois Mounted Infantry, writing of Sherman's march towards Atlanta, says: "It was during the advance that day [May 9, 1864] that we came in contact with the Georgia Cadets from the Military Institute at Marietta, who had come out from the woods at Resaca and formed their line behind a rail fence. After a volley from the Cadets, which killed several of our men, our regiment charged them. . . ."—EDITOR.

belonged to the cadet battery, but they had not been taken into the action. The Federals found them under a shed, where they had been stored for protection from the weather.

The sequel to this scrap of history is briefly told. The cadets retreated in the direction of Marion, some fifty miles distant, where a few days later they were disbanded. General Croxton carried out faithfully his orders to destroy the university. Its handsome buildings, its extensive libraries, and its valuable chemical and physical apparatus, representing in all nearly a half million dollars, went up in smoke. However, like the Virginia Military Institute, the University of Alabama has been rebuilt, and is growing with equal pace with the prosperous State of which it is the educational center. It still retains the military feature as a means of discipline and physical culture among its students; but it is not probable that its cadet corps will ever again have the brush of real war that the boys of 1865 experienced on that memorable April night.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA.

T. C. McCorvey.

"Who ever saw a Dead Cavalryman?"

THE article in THE CENTURY for May, 1888, entitled "The Chances of Being Hit in Battle," contains this statement (page 102): "Cavalrymen go into action oftener than infantrymen, and so their losses, being distributed among a larger number of engagements, do not appear remarkable as reported for any one affair. Still, in some of their fights the 'dead cavalryman' could be seen in numbers that answered only too well the famous question of General Hooker, 'Who ever saw a dead cavalryman?'"

The candor and fairness evident in the whole article forbid the thought of a purpose to cast a reflection on this arm of the service, for Colonel Fox at once proceeds to show on indisputable authority a record of 10,596 "dead cavalrymen." The credit given General Hooker of being the author of this interrogatory, as Colonel Fox states it, is open to objection in more than one respect. General Hooker did not ask a question; he did not make an offensive allusion; but he did make a remark from which have grown many phrases, the most frequent being the form now given. The circumstances calling forth the remark are well known to the writer, and are briefly narrated as follows: When Fitzhugh Lee's brigade crossed the Rappahannock in November, 1862, attacking the outposts at Hartwood Church, composed of four companies of the 3d Pennsylvania Cavalry, he inflicted a loss of eighty men, wounded and captured. Soon after this occurrence had been reported to General Hooker, then commanding the Right Grand Division of the Army of the Potomac, he rode over to General Averell's headquarters to confer with him. Of course the matter under consideration was the loss to General Averell's old regiment, whose record of service had given him rank as brigadier-general. As the interview ended, and General Hooker was leaving, he remarked, "Well, General, we have not had many dead cavalrymen lying about lately!" This remark was not intended to be in any sense offensive or derisive, although this is the use

generally made of it. It was no doubt meant in a comparative sense, as the losses in the cavalry up to that time had not attracted any special mention. Standing alone, as it does in Colonel Fox's article, it admits only of a construction which is thoroughly demolished by the force of statement and narration of facts piled on it by the author of the article, and the circumstances connected with it do not sustain the version given.

Jno. C. Hunterson,
3d Pennsylvania Cavalry.

Shooting into Libby Prison.

A DENIAL BY ONE OF THE GUARD.

IN an article on "Colonel Rose's Tunnel at Libby Prison," that appeared in THE CENTURY MAGAZINE for March, 1888, the author says, on page 780:

A captain of an Ohio regiment was shot through the head and instantly killed while reading a newspaper. He was violating no rule whatever, and when shot was from eight to ten feet inside the window through which the bullet came. This was a wholly unprovoked and wanton murder; the cowardly miscreant had fired the shot while he was off duty, and from the north sidewalk of Carey street. The guards (home guards they were) used, in fact, to gun for prisoners' heads from their posts below pretty much after the fashion of boys after squirrels.

The guard of Libby Prison at that time was the 18th Virginia Heavy Artillery, composed entirely of Virginia troops, and not home guards, and one company (E) was composed of veterans of 1861. This company, formerly known as Kemper's Battery, had been engaged at Vienna on June 17, 1861, and at the first battle of Bull Run, July, 1861.

As to the shooting of prisoners, I was doing guard duty at the prison at that time and very distinctly remember the shooting case referred to. The officer who was shot was Captain Forsythe of the 100th Ohio regiment, and the man who shot him was a private in Company C, 18th Virginia Heavy Artillery, by the name of Charles Weber, and the shooting was accidental. I was standing within three feet of Weber when his gun was discharged, and he was standing in the rear rank of the guard that was just going on duty. Weber was to blame, as he had loaded his gun without orders, and he placed the cap on the nipple and was in the act of letting the hammer down when his thumb slipped and the gun was discharged. He did not have the gun to his shoulder aiming at any one, but it was resting against his right hip in the position of "ready." He had been wounded in the right hand and did not have good use of it, and the morning of the shooting was quite cold, and I suppose these were the causes of his letting the hammer of his gun slip. He was arrested and held until the matter was investigated. The affair cast quite a gloom over our entire command, and Weber was generally blamed for his carelessness.

Since the war I have seen several men who were in the prison at that time, and when I mentioned the shooting of Captain Forsythe they told me that they were satisfied the shooting was purely accidental.

James M. Germond,
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