

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,
Co. E, 18th Virginia Heavy Artillery.

MEMORANDUM ON THE CIVIL WAR.

The Builders of the First Monitor.

THE story of the creation of the first *Monitor* has not as yet been fully told. The papers on the subject in *THE CENTURY* and in "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," filled as they are with facts of interest and importance, are marked by a serious omission of other facts essential to a just award of credit among the builders of the *Monitor*.

Colonel Church, in his paper on John Ericsson, in this magazine for April, 1879, mentions the fact that "there were associated with him [Captain Ericsson] three men of practical experience, great energy, and wealth." Colonel Church names but one of the three, Mr. C. S. Bushnell, though the other two had much the larger share of the practical experience and wealth, and constituted in fact the financial backbone of the enterprise.

Mr. Bushnell, in his letter printed in "Battles and Leaders" (Vol. I., p. 748), names his "two wise and able associates," but omits to mention the facts that his mission at Washington in behalf of Ericsson's battery had failed, and that only after these associates of his brought their experience, energy, and wealth to its aid did that invention stand any chance for adoption by the Government.

Captain Ericsson, in his paper on "The Building of the *Monitor*," discloses his theory that it was his personal argument and explanations before the Naval Board that secured the assent of the Board to a trial of his battery. But it is a demonstrable fact that the assent of the Board had been gained, and a memorandum or preliminary contract for the construction of a floating battery on his plan had been secured by his associates, before Captain Ericsson appeared on the scene at Washington, and before his two leading associates in the construction of the *Monitor* had ever met him.

The salient facts of this transaction, set in the proper order of time, are as follows: Roused by the national emergency, Ericsson had devised his impregnable "cheese-box on a raft." But he was crippled as to means, and out of favor with the Navy Department, and he had felt so outraged by the refusal of the department to pay him for his services in the construction of the United States frigate *Princeton*, that he would not approach the department, nor so much as visit Washington. So his design for a floating battery lay unknown in his office till his friend C. S. Bushnell saw it, approved it, and took it to Washington. Mr. Bushnell secured the attention of Secretary Welles, with whom he was on terms of personal acquaintance, but found a tremendous obstacle in the Naval Board, charged by Congress with the decision of all matters relating to ironclads.

Days lengthened into weeks while Bushnell labored ineffectually to remove the prejudices and obtain the approval of the Board, till he at last desisted under distinct notice from one of the Board that it was per-

fectly useless for him to haunt the department further on any such errand. His own efforts having proved thus unavailing, Bushnell applied to John F. Winslow of the Albany Iron Works of Troy, N. Y., who, with John A. Griswold of the Rensselaer Iron Works of the same city, was in Washington on business connected with the iron plating of the United States ship-of-war *Galena*. Mr. Winslow was struck by the ingenuity and merits of Ericsson's design. He took it to Mr. Griswold and secured his cooperation in an effort to have it adopted by the Government.

These new factors simplified the problem. Winslow and Griswold were leading ironmasters. They had capital, of which Ericsson had none and Bushnell little. They had political as well as personal standing and influence. Backed by such men, the project took on the character of a responsible undertaking, and men who had hitherto turned a deaf ear began to listen.

For obvious reasons, Winslow and Griswold decided to take the scheme past the Naval Board, directly to the head of the nation. Bearing a letter of introduction from their friend Secretary Seward, they secured an interview with President Lincoln, laid the drawings before him, and explained the strong points of the plan. When they ceased speaking Mr. Lincoln asked, "Why do you not take this to the Board which has charge of these matters?"

"Because it has been there to no purpose," was the reply. "Nevertheless, we believe it solves a problem of vast importance to the national cause; and not as ship-builders, for we are not such, but as loyal citizens, we appeal to you to give it a trial."

Impressed by the earnestness of the men, Mr. Lincoln meditated, and then said: "Well, gentlemen, I don't know much about ships, though I once contrived a canal-boat, the model of which is over there in the Patent Office, the merit of which was that it could run where there was no water. But this plan of Ericsson's seems to me to have something in it. Meet me tomorrow morning at Commodore Smith's office in the Navy Department."

That meeting at the Navy Department has been heretofore described. Commodores Smith, Paulding, and Davis, of the Naval Board, Captain Fox, and other officers of the navy were present. Mr. Winslow was the spokesman, and laying out the drawings, he explained the plan of the battery, and urged its adoption with powerful earnestness. The meeting ended with Mr. Lincoln's blunt expression of opinion that there was "something in the thing," emphasized by his quaint remark about the girl's stocking, which has become historical.

Mr. Lincoln's obvious approval had its effect, and next morning Commodore Smith expressed to Mr. Winslow a willingness to authorize him and his associates to construct a floating battery on Ericsson's plan, provided they would assume all the risks of the experiment.

This condition, which the Board possibly supposed would end the whole matter, was accepted, and a memorandum covering the main points of the proposed contract was drawn up and agreed upon. The Naval Board having some doubts, however, in regard to the sufficiency of the strange craft as a sea-going vessel, Captain Ericsson was next called to Washington. He found no difficulty in demonstrating the stability of the proposed vessel, and the contract was perfected without delay.

The contractors of the first part were four in number, named in the instrument in the following order: John Ericsson, John F. Winslow, John A. Griswold, and C. S. Bushnell. In addition to other rigid conditions, the contract contained a provision that in case the said vessel should fail in performance of speed for sea service, or in the successful working of the turret and guns, with safety to the men in the turret, or in her buoyancy to float and carry her battery, the party of the first part should refund to the United States the amount of money advanced to them on said vessel, within thirty days after such failure should have been declared by the party of the second part, and that the vessel should be held by the United States as collateral security until the money so advanced should be refunded.

Only men of strong patriotism and strong faith would have assumed obligations involving so large an outlay, to be expended upon a novel device distrusted by experienced naval officers, and upon terms which threw upon them all the risks, even though failure might be due to insufficient skill on the part of a commander and crew in the selection of whom they had no voice.

Mr. Bushnell says that this condition was an embarrassment to Captain Ericsson and himself. If so, may it not have been because their pecuniary risk was so much less than that of their associates? If the *Monitor* had failed in performance, Winslow and Griswold would have lost three-fourths of all the money expended in her construction, Bushnell, or his financial backer, would have lost one-fourth, and Captain Ericsson would have lost his time and labor. But Colonel Church intimates, in a way which amounts to a statement of a fact, that after his experience with the *Princeton*, Captain Ericsson would not have accepted this condition had he known it in advance. However this may be, Winslow and Griswold accepted this hard condition and signed the contract before it was taken to Captain Ericsson for his signature.

My space in these pages does not permit me to cite documents; but I have made no statement above that cannot be sustained by documentary proof or by the evidence of an unimpeachable living witness in the person of John F. Winslow. I submit that these facts show that two names which have had but the barest mention in THE CENTURY articles on the *Monitor* should be brought to the front. For the men who bear them were

both at the front and the back of the enterprise. They took the lead when others had failed. They secured President Lincoln's approval. They argued the question before the Naval Board. They brought to the project the personal and financial responsibility indispensable to its acceptance by the Navy Department. They advanced all the money expended on the *Monitor* up to a comparatively late stage in her construction, and they furnished large quantities of iron and materials. Without their resources the contract could not have been executed by their associates. They made no money and cared to make none on the first *Monitor*; but without their capital the first *Monitor* probably never would have been built; and without their earnest and powerful efforts in forwarding the work of construction the *Monitor* certainly would not have been ready in time to meet the emergency in Hampton Roads, and thus save the credit of the United States as a naval power, prevent the dissolution of the blockade, and defeat the recognition of the Confederacy by England and France. These men were John F. Winslow, still living in honored retirement in his home on the Hudson, and the late Hon. John A. Griswold of Troy.

Other names also deserve mention. That of Thomas F. Rowland of Greenpoint, L. I., who as a sub-contractor built the hull of the *Monitor*, has been printed in THE CENTURY. Other sub-contractors were the Delamater Iron Works of New York, who made the engine, machinery, and propeller, and Abbott of Baltimore, who supplied the turret plates.

One fact more. The man who is popularly credited with the invention of the revolving turret was not the original inventor of that distinguishing feature of the *Monitor*. Of this he was well aware. In Captain Ericsson's paper on "The Building of the *Monitor*" he refers to a revolving tower invented by Theodore R. Timby, describing it as a device for warfare on land. This is an insufficient description. The records of the United States Patent Office show that Timby's device was a revolving tower or turret, for use on land or water. It was protected by a caveat, issued in 1843, eleven years before Captain Ericsson submitted to Napoleon III. his plan for a floating battery with a revolving dome. A patent for it was issued to Mr. Timby in September, 1862, and Captain Ericsson and his associates in the building of the *Monitor* paid Mr. Timby, for the use of his patent, a royalty of \$5,000 on each of the monitors constructed by them subsequent to the first. Is not this circumstance of interest enough to be comprised in the history of the *Monitor* as related in this magazine? John Ericsson was a great inventor. His fame is secure. Certainly I would not lessen by a jot the credit which is his due. Let others also have the credit which is theirs.

G. G. Benedict.

BURLINGTON, VERMONT.

