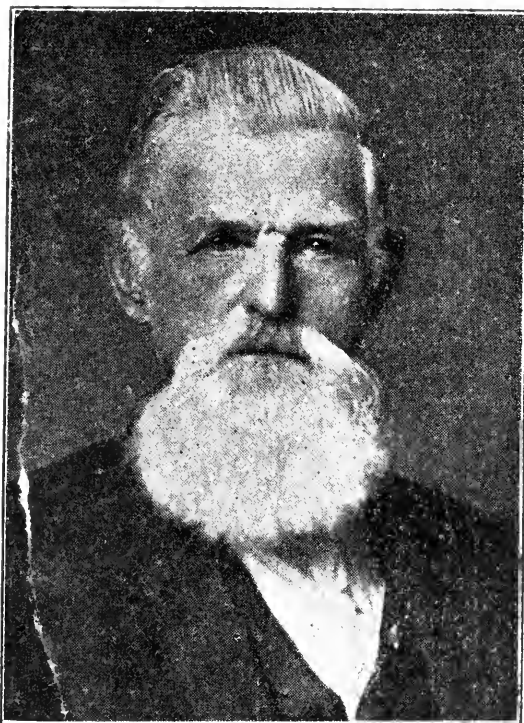


E605

.S65



RALPH J. SMITH

Company K, Second Texas Infantry. Born
at Centerville, St. Mary's Parish, La.,
July 19th, 1840. Now resident
of San Marcos, Hays
County, Texas

Reminiscences of Civil War

By *Ralph J. Smith, Sometimes Private.*

In the year 1861 the grim visaged god of war reigned supreme throughout Texas. In June of that year Ex-Governor Stocckdale, a man of brilliant attainments as well as a fiery Southern patriot, spoke to a large audience of citizens of Jackson County in the court house of the town of Texanna. His eloquent pleadings of the Confederate cause, for he was mightier in words than deeds, created great excitement and enthusiasm throughout the surrounding country, inflaming the minds of his hearers, especially the young men, to fever heat, and they were eager to enter the fray and drive the cruel invader of their beloved land off the earth or surrender their lives in the attempt. So I lost no time in joining the company then being organized by Clark Owen who up to this time was a strong Union man, opposing secession, who became our Captain. He was a man about fifty-five years old and a Christian gentleman.

I wish I were able to describe the glorious anticipation of the first few days of our military lives, when we each felt individually able to charge and annihilate a whole company of blue coats. What brilliant speeches we made and the dinners the good people spread for us, and Oh the bewitching female eyes that pierced the breasts of our grey uniforms, stopping temporarily the heart beats of many a fellow that the enemies bullets were destined soon to do forever.

On the 10th of October we were ordered to Houston where we were mobilized into the Second Texas Infantry, commanded by Colonel John C. Moore, our company designated Company K. Here again all was excitement and all felt that it was only a

matter of few months until we would return home covered with glory and renown. The possibility of such a thing as defeat never for a moment entered the mind of a member of our inexperienced corps. Day after day we were dined, wine and flattered. Night after night we floated upon a sea of glory. The ladies petted and lionized us; preachers prayed with and for us, declaring that the lord was on our side, so we need have no fears. Alas how soon we were to realize the truth of epigram that the lord was on the side with the biggest guns.

While in this camp that brainy old war veteran, Ex-President of the Republic of Texas, General Sam Houston, made us a talk calculated to dampen the ardor of men less intoxicated than we poor boys with pomp and glory of war. He told us we knew not what we did; that the resources of the north were almost exhaustless. That time and money would wear us out and conquer us at last. However he might as well had been giving advice to the inmates of a lunatic asylum. We knew no such word as fail.

On the 22nd of March, 1861, after months of impatient waiting, we were ordered to the front. At last a thousand hearts beat happily. Hurriedly boarding a train we were carried to Beaumont by rail, thence by boat to Wise's Bluff, head of navigation on the Neches river. From there we were marched to Alexandria, La., thence transports carried us down Red river and up the Mississippi to Memphis, Tennessee, where we immediately boarded a railroad train for Corinth Mississippi.

After four days rest at Corinth we received orders to cook three days

rations, preparatory to marching to Shiloh, or Pittsburg Landing, twenty five miles East. We marched on the third day of April, advancing slowly on account of the wretched condition of the road. Of course we ate our rations in the first twenty four hours, it being a well-known soldier's maxim that rations are carried easier in the stomach than on the back. After floundering through the slush for two days we threw our tired bodies down in a muddy corn field where drowsing and freezing, hungry and soaking we spent the last night before our initiation into the horrors of real war.

The next morning, Sunday April 6th we went into the hard fought battle of Shiloh. I shall not attempt to give a detailed description of the bloody encounter. A private soldier has no knowledge of military movements outside of his immediate surroundings. In fact men of the rank and file are often puffed up with the pride of victory only to find out sometime afterwards that he had been well-whipped. In great battles with thousands on each side, especially privates, are like little screws in the wheel of a giant machine. They are carried along by the power that moves the whole mass without knowing where or why.

About nine o'clock with empty stomachs and appetites made voracious by the faint smell of commissaries emanating from General Grant's camp our regiment went into the midst of the fight. All I remember for the first few minutes after was a terrible noise great smoke, incessant rattling of small arms, infernal confusion and then I realized that the whole line of the enemy was in disorderly retreat. We followed them close for fear they would carry off their commissaries but they did not appear to be as hungry as we were and dashed through the camp without the slightest halt, while we prepared for the morrow by

taking possession of the stores. Our regiment, the Second Texas, raw recruits and weak from hunger as it were, behaved like veterans, and although I have seen the honor claimed in print by others, it undoubtedly played the principal roll in the capture of the brigade of General Prentice. I witnessed the General surrender his sword to Colonel Moore and saw the men lay down their arms and march to the rear under guard. In the words of Sargeant Bill, wit of our regiment, (of whom more hereafter) "This day's fight was as easy as seining for suckers."

When evening shades began to draw a curtain over the bloody field General Grant's forces, disorganized and beaten, could be seen like a great unordered mass, huddled under the canons of the gunboats. The spiteful crack of small arms gradually ceased and we prepared to accept a slight token of the regards presented to us by the enemy in the shape of quartermaster's stores, commissaries etc. Oh how empty we found ourselves now that we had time to think of it. Having inflated our anatomies with crackers, sausage, pigs feet, macaroni, sugar coffee etc. we began to select such blankets overcoats and other clothing as we felt the need of. It soon began to be rumored among us that our Commander, General Albert Sidney Johnson was dead upon the field. No man who has not been a soldier can appreciate the change this news brought in the morale of our whole army. Although still rejoicing over the result of the battle, the faces of the men showed rather the grim satisfaction of the successful gladiator than the glad exultant smile of the mirth-crowned warrior. To his death the soldiers almost universally attributed their failure to obtain victory on the next day, but now we know there were other causes.

Grant's reinforcements were larger in number than we thought and I am afraid that failure to destroy all or nearly all the captured supplies, contributed largely to our repulse. Many of our boys were raw recruits who had yet to learn that a battle is never over as long as the enemy is in sight. Our victory had seemingly been so complete that it was everywhere reported in the ranks that the battle was over, all we would have to do next day would be to take charge of Grant's Army, which was ready to surrender. I saw numbers of men proceeding to the rear loaded with clothing and supplies. Poor fellows, they had been hungry so long and wet so much, they had fought so long and so gallantly for them they were no doubt convinced that they had earned a little comfort and rest, though it would not have changed the ultimate result of the war, probably would have prolonged the bloody and useless struggle.

For the honor of the boys I have often regretted that we did not give Grant time to apply the torch to his stores. Worn out but for once not hungry, we slept through the night. Though the clouds poured down a perfect deluge those who had escaped wounds or guard duty knew it not until the roar of artillery awoke us the next morning.

About ten o'clock on the 7th the Second Texas was ordered to charge a masked battery, supported by a brigade in ambush. This was a warm corner indeed, for in a very short time the regiment lost one hundred and fifty men, including the captain of my company. The writer was soon after wounded in the left leg, falling in the enemy's line and was of course captured. So I would advise all boys going into battle to avoid being shot in the left leg below the knee, for it is a daily reminder to me of that plighted war.

Our army, failing to break the ene-

my's line, hastily fell back to Corinth and I was a prisoner at the tender mercies of the foe. Our army at the battle of Shiloh numbered forty thousand and three hundred and Grant's forces on the first day numbered forty nine thousand. After General Buell reinforced him on the night of the 6th he had seventy thousand and eight hundred. We lost in killed, wounded and missing, ten thousand and seven hundred. Grant's losses according to General Sherman's statement, was thirteen thousand five hundred and seventy-three.

My wound was bandaged and together with many others of both blue and grey I was sent to St. Louis, Mo. where a hospital for prisoners was fitted up by some angels in female forms called Rebel Sympathizers. Human Sympathizers would have been a much more appropriate name, for those big-hearted ladies I am sure knew neither North nor South, but that all mankind were their brothers. The hospital was located in McDowell's College on Gratiot street and many a wounded Confederate has cause to thank heaven and woman-kind for the delicate care he received therein.

The physician into whose hands I fell had at one time lived in Houston, Texas, and strange to say, out of the thousand or more wounded prisoners I was the only Texan in that department of the hospital, so the doctor was particularly kind to me, in return for which, as a slight token of my gratitude, I made a pipe of stone with my name engraved on it, also name and number of my company and regiment and presented it to him as a souvenir. He seemed to prize it very highly.

To the doctor and the ladies of the city who supplied me with food more appropriate for the sick than prisoners of war are furnished I owe my life, for weak and exhausted from loss of blood my condition was critical for

sometime, notwithstanding the care they bestowed upon me.

There were a dozen or more Confederate officers near where I was in the hospital and one day they were amusing themselves by singing Dixie and other songs when a German U. S. Captain ordered them to stop. They paid no attention to him and continued to sing, whereupon he became furious and ordered the guard to fire into their room which they promptly did. No one was hurt, however, but the Captain, who I heard, was cashiered. At any rate we never saw him again.

After about three months in St. Louis in College I learned some things and my wound being healed, for some cause I was removed to the penitentiary at Alton Illinois, which I enjoyed more than being in college, as I soon recruited sufficiently to throw away my crutches and enjoy the association of the one thousand other prisoners, whom the United States had kindly sent North to spend the summer and recuperate and gather strength for the fatigue of coming campaigns. We received as good treatment in the Alton prison as prisoners could expect in time of war. We relieved the tedium of our confinement by manufacturing every conceivable kind of trinklet of stone, wood, or any other material we could get that our few tools would work. I saw a violin made there that was a work of art.

There was great excitement among the officers and guards of the prison one night. I learned next morning that a Missouri officer, Colonel McLaughlin, and twenty-five of his men had escaped by tunneling under the prison walls. Of course the outside sentinel had been bribed, at least we so thought.

After three months of prison life at Alton we were marched on board transports, which were protected by gunboats, and conveyed to within one mile and opposite Vicksburg landing,

where we were regularly exchanged and soon crossed over to Vicksburg where the sympathizing sons and daughters of Dixie, in anticipation of our arrival, had prepared a bountiful feast for us, such a one as makes a ragged soldier feel like rising up at its end and exclaiming: "Fate cannot harm me today for I have dined."

After eating until the provender did not taste good any more I concluded to look around for some one I knew and soon discovered the familiar faces of seventeen of the Second Texas boys, who had been captured like myself, at Shiloh, but had been in prison at Camp Douglas near Chicago and had just been exchanged.

Concluding that we were free to resume our occupation of wrestling with the boys in blue for possession of their commissaries and to meet with success would need the rest of the boys, we boarded a train for Jackson Mississippi, in search of our regiment. Not hearing anything of it upon our arrival there went into an exchange camp nearby on Pearl River, electing a captain of our little company in order to draw rations.

We promptly began to worry General Pemberton, his adjutants and every one else who would listen to us with anxious and repeated requests for information as to the whereabouts of the Second Texas, for we were all exceedingly eager for a sight of the boys once more. Ten or twelve days passed without the slightest information being obtained, when the whole camp of the exchange men, about a hundred in number, were ordered to report to General Pemberton's headquarters for organization into a regiment, although half of the men were convalescent and unable to shoulder a musket. There were, however, loafing around headquarters in Jackson able bodied Lieutenant-Colonels, Majors, Captains and Lieutenants, enough to officer half a dozen regiments, all

anxious to command this new regiment. We eighteen poor, ignorant Texas privates, could not readily account for this, but finally concluded that they were the sole survivors of their command, which had all been killed or captured, but as this did not augur well for their care of their men or their bravery on the battle field, we concluded to immediately make a roar by presenting ourselves at headquarters and demanding permission to go to Hollow Springs, Mississippi where we hoped to get news of our regiment. The commanding general, after remonstrating with us on the folly of going in search of a regiment the whereabouts of which we knew nothing an seeing that we were obstinate and determined, at last reluctantly granted us the required permission and transportation.

The next day found us in Hollow Springs and after two days in which time we subsisted alone on red persimmons, we were made happy by the information that the Second Texas was in the vicinity and a few days afterward had the pleasure of being quartered under the old flag again.

Our old Colonel, now General Moore he having been promoted for gallantry on the battle field of Shiloh, was in command of the brigade to which the Second Texas belonged. We had hardly shaken hands with half of our friends nor had a chance to reply to shouts of welcome and words of congratulations from the boys in the ranks before we had orders to march in a body to the General's tent where we soon lined up. No sooner had we halted than the General appeared, grasped each of us by the hand and with tears trickling down his cheeks spoke to us of the joys he felt at seeing us back again safe and sound and congratulated us upon our perseverance in overcoming so many obstacles in our efforts to array ourselves once more under the flag of our beloved Second Texas. I shall re-

member that scene as long as my mind endures for it taught me to appreciate the fact that men are not always what they seem. General Moore was a graduate of West Point, a strict disciplinarian with rather a haughty air, but when we saw him mingling his tears with those of the ragged, foot-sore returned prisoners we knew that beneath his grim and cold exterior there beat a heart as tender as a little child's. Such expressions of feeling together with sympathetic acts of a thousand kinds afforded a bond of trust between many of our officers and their men that nothing but death could break. Soldiers will follow such leaders into most death-dealing hail of bullets without deliberations or fear of the consequences.

Upon returning to the ranks I found many a gap in the line, missed many a familiar face. Some had died upon the field of battle, some sickened and passed away, some disappeared none could say whither. Those yet left had become inured to exposure and hardship. Whole-souled jolly fellows every one with a heart for every fate. I was thrown with troops from almost every state, both North and South, during my four years in the army and I feel confident that the Texas Volunteer excelled them all for light-hearted jolity and "don't give a darn" under all circumstances. He accepted whatever the fates dealt out to him, good or bad, perhaps grumbled for a minute if very bad, then laughed and joked the rest of the day and half the night. The prophet Jeremiah was much given to lamentations, yet he said a merry heart is a continual feast, and that is about all these Texas soldiers had to feast on for many consecutive hours on numerous occasions.

The jolliest most quizzical of all my chums was noted for the uncertainty

of his temper and I shall content myself by calling him Sergeant Bill. At the time of which I am writing Bill was about twenty-five years old, six feet two inches in height and straight as an Indian chief, with long black hair and eyes of the same color so piercing that they seemed to penetrate one even to the sole of his boots whenever Bill was deeply in earnest. A native of Virginia, he had come to Texas in his early youth so that nature and education had combined in his make-up a chivalrous ideal of the old Virginia Cavalier, together with the dare-devil recklessness of the Texas cowboy, and to slightly paraphrase Shakespeare the elements so mixed in him that nature might stand up and say to all the world: "Here is a soldier."

Bill had been one of the first to respond to his State's call to arms and expressed his firm belief that every male from sixteen to one hundred able to shoulder a gun, should be in the field under his country's banner. He swore that the only cause of our failure to crush the United States and end the war in a year was a mortifying fact that there were thousands of able-bodied men in the South who not only refused to volunteer but were skulking in the brush to escape being conscripted. He could not abide a conscript, his idea being that a man who had to be forced into the army would not fight and was good for nothing but to dig trenches after he got there.

Bill had devoted himself to profanity in all of its various branches. For artistic conception and brilliant execution his oaths stand without a parallel in the annals of war. I first became acquainted with him during our journey from Houston while we were camped for the night at Wise's Bluff. His discerning eye discovered a warehouse containing several barrels of "joy to the world" tonic. Procuring an auger he crawled under the build-

ing, bored through the floor and the bottom of one of these barrels and proceeded to draw off the precious fluid. Having filled all the vessels available he drove a plug in the hole, returned to camp and informed the boys of the windfall.

On my return to the regiment my physical condition was far from satisfactory the regimental physician reporting that I was afflicted with phthisis pulmonum and unfit for duty. I was offered a discharge but being still hopeful and zealous for our cause I refused to accept, thereupon was ordered to Quitman, Miss., to recuperate. Quitman was a health resort before the civil war. A hospital for convalescent Texas soldiers in charge of Dr. Bryant of Houston was located one mile from town near one of the finest and best springs I have ever seen, the water of which is strongly impregnated with red sulphur. I soon discovered that the diet furnished in the hospital was as everywhere else in the Confederate Army, but rather short without any frills or tucks. In fact it was plain, so very plain that it became necessary for the inmates to embellish it somewhat in order to make life worth living.

Rest and the sulphur water seemed to engender in us a decided and continual hankering for poultry, fresh pork and fruits. These our generous compatriots in the vicinity furnished us with true Southern hospitality. We just made a requisition for such eatables as were available and then all that was necessary to procure them was to step up to the coop, pen or tree and draw them. We generally selected a dark night to draw these delicacies, for fowls are much easier handled at night and as our good neighbors who so kindly furnished us were at that time soundly sleeping off the fatigue of their daily toils we were exceedingly careful not to awaken them. Thus, thanks to the noble Mississippians who raised and

furnished us with so many of the good things of life, we were enabled, if not to wear purple and fine linen, at least to fare sumptuously every day. The above mentioned diet, together with the healing waters of the sulphur springs, cured my horrible disease in about forty days.

Having been so successful in finding health and many other blessings in this vicinity I was fain to linger but in the latter part of December Dr Bryant cruelly ordered me to join my command. Before the receipt of this unwelcome order eight or ten of us pre-empted a jug of what is known in this section as "mountain dew," and after supper we gathered in the dining room of the hospital and proceeded to vex the drowsy ear of night with maudlin mirth. After spreading the festive board and mixing a good strong decoction, which for want of a better name I will call punch, toasts were proposed. Among the first was "Our Country", responded to as follows:

"Here's to our country, may she ever be free,

As the winds of the mountains or the waves of the sea;

May the hearts of her sons n'er fail in her need,

But drive from her soil the Yankee breed."

The second toast was proposed to "Our Sweethearts" and was responded to thus:

Our sweethear's dear, to them we drink,

Though nameless here, of them we think;

Here's health to them and wealth to them,

With every blessing else to them."

Then someone proposed a toast to "Women" which was responded to this way :

Here's to our women, God bless them

And death to the man who'd oppress them;

Death to his body and death to his

soul,

Who'd harm the dear creatures for passion or gold."

About January 1st, 1873, I rejoined my regiment at Camp Timmons, seven miles above Vicksburg,, where it had gone into winter quarters. Every one was in good spirits and living as well as past experience in the service gave them reason to expect. General Bouregard had been succeeded as division commander by General Maury, who was an able officer and very popular. The only fault the boys found with him was his weakness for general review,, dress parade etc. The veterans of the rank and file seriously objected to these "circus parades" as they called them, because they imposed upon them a hard day's work marching and counter marching for no earthly purpose which they could understand except to give the officers an opportunity to show themselves off in all their glory to an admiring crowd of fashionables and society matrons who drove out from the city to our reviews. General Maury was a splendid horseman and of commanding appearance and no doubt impressed many sentimental female eyes as a "thing of beauty and a joy forever" as he dashed up and down the line of troops on his spirited charger. But with the boys in the ranks it was quite different.

Among the crowd of spectators on the days of review were many silly girls who adored an officer's uniform no matter how unworthy of it was the man inside. The attention of a member of the staff filled these fair damsels with delirious joy while the flattering notice of a handsome general in command threw them into such spasms of ecstatic delight that the nerves of a few of them never recovered from the shock. To these thoughtless creatures what appeared so grand to the ragged foot-sore veterans in the ranks were simply a part of the officer's equipment, like their horses

and uniforms. Being fully aware of this we had decided objections to abetting in their folly and avoided review whenever it was possible to do so.

Our army, of course, had a number of "lady killers" among our officers. However fine clothes do not make a coward any more than they make a man and often the most fastidious dandies would fight like demons through the smoke and grim of battle.

As I am writing reminiscences and not history I shall pass over the battles fought during my absence from my regiment. I learned upon my return that the men in ranks fully expected to fight a decisive battle at Corinth with the army under General Halleck, which appeared before our fortifications at that place soon after the battle of Shiloh. This army numbered ninety thousand but our men were anxious to try conclusions with it although our force was only about half as many, having held their own at Shiloh when the odds against them were as great, after marching and fighting for three consecutive days; they believed that when fresh and having the advantage of fortifications they should have won but General Bouregard having become satisfied that the fighting qualities of his men were all that could be desired, apparently concluded to give them a little training for speed, as they were ordered to retreat toward Tupelo, fifty miles distant. The boys did not approve of this mode of warfare and General Bouregard was severely censured by his men for the seemingly uncalled for retreat though some no doubt blessed him for leading them away from danger.

Colonel Ashbel Smith was at this time, January 1863, in command of the Second Texas Regiment. Colonel Smith was an able officer, thoroughly educated and a diplomat of some note, having at one time represented

the Republic of Texas at the court of France. He was quite an athlete and his temper was somewhat inflammatory and when enraged he cut such fantastic capers before high heaven as made the angels smile. These bursts of anger soon passed off but while they lasted the Colonel danced, swore, jingled his sword and denounced the object of his wrath in words that burned holes in the surrounding atmosphere. Passionate and eccentric though he was the Colonel's heart was full jeweled, twenty-four karats fine and devoted to his men, especially the old volunteers in the ranks, whom he loved like brothers. However this did not prevent us from laying plans and executing schemes to bring on his crazy spells as we called them, and many a quiet smile or hearty laugh we enjoyed at the Colonel's expense.

Early in 1863 our regiment was recruited with conscripts, about one hundred of them being chased out of the brush and into our ranks. This I think was a mistake. Conscripts and volunteers being actuated by different motives, interfere and hinder each other like a team composed of a lazy mule and a spirited horse, when combined in the same regiment. Our conscripts never amalgamated with the "boys" as the Colonel always called the remnant of the original volunteers, which was no doubt rather our fault than theirs, for we considered ourselves their superiors, an opinion even in which our officers shared, as the following occurrence will illustrate.

Owing to his eccentric movements when he had a "spell" on we had given Colonel Smith the name of "Jingle Box". Though, of course, we did not use that pet name when addressing him he was fully aware of it, having heard us use it in a thousand different indirect ways without taking notice but one day as he rode by an unlucky conscript called out to another.

er: "Here comes Jingle Box". The Colonel immediately charged him and on his taking to the brush dismounted and soon ran him down and seizing him by the ear and emphasizing every other word with a hearty kick he swore by the Olympic gods that no blank conscript should call him names. The Colonel was somewhat Irish when enraged.

I have often wondered since the dark days of our intestine strife at the cold-blooded indifference with which we at that time looked upon death and the grave. They being hourly before our eyes in their various forms they soon ceased to inspire us with awe and became matters to joke about. While out foraging one day with Sargeant Bill we discovered a pair of graves. At the head of them was a pine board upon which the following lines were written:

"The Yankee hords and thieving bands,
Came South to rob our houses and
steal our lands;
But this narrow contracted spot,
Is all this poor Yankee ever got."

The other grave being unmarked we decided that the poetaster, after delivering himself of the above epitath, had immediately fallen dead from exhaustion, necessarily following his monumental effort, and some kindly disposed passer-by interred him beside his late enemy. Acting upon this conclusion Bill proceeded to set up a board at the head of the unmarked grave inscribed thus:
"Here lies a monumental poet,
His neighbor's epitath will show it.

About twelve o'clock one cold wet night the latter part of January 1863 we received orders to cook the usual three days rations preparatory to marching. Two hours afterward Camp Timmons was deserted and we were tramping through the darkness toward Snyder's Bluff, seven miles distant on the Yazoo river. This was the only occasion I remember to have

known Bill's judgement to be seriously at fault. It being exceedingly dark and being very tired he swore he would advance no further without resting. He proceeded to sit down on what he supposed to be a log but rapidly descended about ten feet to the bottom of a muddy branch. Bill's oaths and the shouts of laughter that followed this ludicrous accident seemed to throw a shadow of life over the surroundings sufficiently to enable us to fish him out of the difficulty.

Our advance guard arrived about eight A. M., the rear coming about noon. I think that some of our conscripts failed to show up at all, but none appeared to know or care. During the afternoon we embarked on a transport and steamed up the river for Yazoo City. This mode of transportation was very unpopular with the boys. They even preferred marching to being packed aboard like fowls cooped for market, with no opportunity to augment their scanty rations by contributions from the surrounding country. Our first night afloat passed off quietly. Some relieved the monotony by playing cards, others by singing songs. I give below one of these songs written by a member of our regiment, which has never appeared in print:

SHILOH.

Draw near my gallant comrades and
a story to you I'll sing,
A sad and mournful song of war,
tears to your eyes twill bring;
One April morn on Shiloh's plains the
rising sun displayed,
One hundred thousand soldiers in bat-
tle line arrayed.
Soon drum and fife proclaimed the
hour that we must march away,
Mid canon's roar and musket's crack
to mingle in the fray.

CHORUS.

Cross Shiloh's fields the bullets sped,
On Shiloh's hills full many bled—
On Shiloh's plains lay thousands dead
While Shiloh's ribs ran red with blood.

Time after time we charged the foe
who made a stubborn stand,
And ere the sun had reached the
West we fought them hand to hand.
At last their solid ranks we broke
and scattered them afar,
And then the vale of night fell down
and closed the scene of war.
The memory of that bloody day the
heart with anguish fills,
For dead and dieing everywhere lay
thick on Shiloh's hills.

When morning's light once more ap-
peared drums beat to arms again,
Unmindful of the dieing and heedless
of the slain;
And soon the canon's deadly mouth
renewed its angry roar,
Ten thousand fell and thousands sped
to battle never more.
Each place in ranks may be refilled
but not in heavy hearts,
That watch and pray for their return
throughout our country's parts.

This song is set to the tune of Joe Bowers.

Life on board had become distress-
ingly dull and I saw from a well
known expression on Bill's counte-
nance that something was likely to
happen soon to break the monotony,
so was not all surprised when on the
morning following it was suddely
shivered into a thousand fragments.
Someone had during the night dis-
figured the mane and tail of the Col-
onel's black charger to such an ex-
tent that we were unable to recog-
nize him. The resulting "crazy
spell" was one of the most exerns-
iating that we ever succeeded in
bringing on the Colonel. He charged
up and down the deck, beat the floor

with his sword and swore that if the
dastard who did this unholy deed did
not come forward to be hung immedi-
ately he would throw the whole re-
giment in irons and make the last
one of them draw for a black bean
and shoot the man who got it for an
example.

Soon after this naval engagement,
in which so many lives were threat-
ened and none lost, we reached Ya-
zoo City, landed and marched to the
suburbs where we went into camp.

This picturesque little city is sur-
rounded by a beautiful and fertile
country which had never, to this time
been invaded by the soldiers of either
army, no chickens were crowing
and fat hogs grunting in every di-
rection. Such attractive sights and
charming sounds created among us
a strong desire to establish perman-
ent headquarters but it turned out
to be another case of "Twas ever
thus since childhood's early hour",
for much to their chagrin the regi-
ment was ordered to re-embark next
day. Together with one other man
I had been out on a foraging expedi-
tion and knew nothing of the depart-
ure of the command until our re-
turn the following morning. When dis-
covering that the camp was vacated
and not a soldier to be found we held
a council of war and concluded that
the last scoundrel of them had des-
erted and decided to hold the fort
for further orders. On the morning of
the third day, with visions of the
guard house and a bread and water
diet before his eyes, my companion
deserted me and went in search of
the regiment. Though left forlorn I
was not alone by any means for the
citizens of the city soon took me in
hand and entertained me like a Maj-
or-General. But the fairest day has
its night and my holiday was sud-
denly obscured by the arrival of Cap-
tain McGinnis of my regiment who
promptly attached me to a squad of

ten men, sent out under him to gather a bunch of negroes to be used in building fortifications.

The Captain, who had come down by boat, soon procured himself a good horse, mounted, gave the command to "forward, march," and my elysium was no more. We had not proceeded far before the Captain, casting his eyes over the landscape, casually remarked: "Boys, this appears to be a beautiful and prosperous country. Horses and saddles must be quite plentiful around here." This seemingly unimportant remark was sufficient to transfer us from infantry to cavalry service, for without further orders we were soon all mounted. I was among the first to secure a "charger" in the shape of a mule, which I found hitched in the outskirts of the City. I christened my mount Prestigitator, because he played me so many tricks, and my companions soon changed my appellation to Zachariah on account of my being compelled to climb a tree to mount him with safety. On my return four days later I left the mule exactly where I had "conscripted" him, and never heard from him again. His owner, no doubt, had long before been convinced from his actions that the beast was an emisary of Belzebub and was not at all surprised to find him in the same spot where he had left him after an unaccountable absence of four days. We captured the required number of negroes, some twenty five or thirty and when we returned loaded them on a transport and proceeded up the river to the mouth of the Yellow Bushy river where the fortifications were in course of construction. These blacks were used exclusively as laborers. I never saw an armed negro in the Confederate service. The chief fault of our soldiers was their contempt for the spade. Very few of them had been accustomed to hard manual lab-

or and avoided trench digging as much as possible, often to our disadvantage.

After delivering our charges we joined our regiment, which we found located at Fort Pemberton, near the junction of the Tallahassee and Yazoo rivers. This Fort had been recently constructed as a part of the line of defense of Vicksburg against General Grant, that city being the last stronghold on the Mississippi river in our possession after the fall of New Orleans. This Fort was not a brilliant example of military engineering. A shell from a gunboat had exploded a magazine, killing and severely wounding twelve or fifteen men, which occurred soon after our arrival. We always referred to it as a slaughter pen. While we were here we were confronted on several occasions by a portion of Grant's army, but they did not attack us, and as we stood strictly on the defensive no engagements occurred. An occasional shelling by a gunboat was the only fire of the enemy we were exposed to while in this vicinity, and as these did not venture near enough to do much damage their shelling merely served to break the monotony of camp life.

The outposts of the opposing army were on several occasions just opposite each other on the river, which was at this place about seventy five yards wide. The pickets on these posts would often amuse each other by tantalizing or joking. Often the guards entered into all the preliminaries for exchanging rations, newspapers, etc., but no exchange ever actually occurred.

We had in our regiment a young Irishman, brave as a lion and of powerful phisic, who, when drinking was dangerous to either friend or foe that crossed him. This man, whose name was Ferrin, had gotten the idea into his head that our Maj-

or was prejudiced against him, and used his authority to vent his personal spite against him. This officer ordered Ferrin to draw off the carcass of a dead mule from the proximity of the camp. Being in a surely mood the Irishman told him to point his nose in the direction of hades and to "double quick." This enraged the Major and he struck him a blow with the flat of his sword. Ferrin, wild with passion, immediately seized a piece of rail lying at his feet and would have brained the Major on the spot had he not turned and fled. The Major made for a crowd of men who saw them coming at full speed and began to laugh and yell, cheering first one and then the other until the whole camp was in an uproar. The officer ran into the crowd and someone tripped up his pursuer and he was secured. The laughing of the crowd brought Ferrin to his senses and he did not try to catch the Major.

Grant's movements indicating that he had no intentions of approaching Vicksburg from the direction in which we lay we were ordered to evacuate Fort Pemberton and return to Camp Timmons seven miles above Vicksburg. This was welcome news to all the boys as there was not a single chicken left to announce the coming of morn and the voice of the porker was no more heard.

mons the enemy made a feeble attempt to land troops at Chickamauga Bayou, nearby, but as they withdrew after a slight skirmish our officers concluded that this was a ruse to cover General Grant's real intentions and we were ordered to Warrington, on the Mississippi, twenty miles below Vicksburg.

Here was located a Fort with a few heavy guns commanding the river which up to the time had succeeded in preventing the passage of the enemy's gunboats. Provisions became ex-

ceedingly scarce while we were stationed at Warrington and continued so until a piece of bacon was looked upon as a treasure to be jealously guarded. Col. Smith had begged, bought or stolen a piece of a hog which he had concealed under his cot. During a night his dreams were disturbed by something apparently crawling under his cot. Seizing his sword in one hand while he made a quick grab with the other he grasped the hand of a conscript. Leading his prisoner out into the light of the campfire the Colonel minutely examined his crest-fallen countenance and exclaimed: "I know that it was a blamed conscript. If it had been one of the old boys I never would have gotten my hands on him". Then giving him a kick he returned to his slumbers.

Hunger hath no ears, neither hath it a conscience. Pushed on by hope or fear of scorn men will brave the terrors of the battle field with the most reckless abandon but few indeed are those who have the moral fortitude to leave the pangs of hunger in their own stomachs half appeased in order to relieve a starving comrade to a similiar extent. The quality and quantity of our rations continued to get no better while at Warrington, so much so it required the utmost inguinity on the part of each of us to keep the lamp of life alight.

Some one discovered that the swamp around our camps were full of wild bees and a hunt for the trees containing their stores of honey was organized. By working all day in the mud and water up to our waists, for we were compelled to wade bayous which here run into the Mississippi, we succeeded in gathering a sufficient quantity to supply the whole regiment with at least one full meal of this delicious sweet.

The lord tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb sometimes and we made another discovery of nature's bounty

on this expedition. We found the above mentioned bayous contained innumerable craw-fish, which we captured in great profusion. Then after these were cooked they added much to the relish of our corn dodger.

On May the fifteenth, 1863 we hurriedly marched into Vicksburg, taking our position in the trenches in the rear of the city. We soon found that General Grant with a force said to be one hundred thousand strong had just attacked General Pemberton on the Big Black river, defeated him and drove his inferior force behind the fortifications at Vicksburg and was rapidly advancing with an overwhelming army.

On the morning of the sixteenth of May we found our whole system of breastworks extending in a semi-circle around the city to a junction with the river above and below, seven miles in length confronted by a heavy line. Preparations were made to meet the charge which was momentarily expected. Amunition was issued more freely than rations. Company officers laid aside their swords and took up muskets. Parsons withdrew under the bluffs of the river, I suppose that their prayers for our success might ascend to the throne of grace unmingled with the unholy sound of war. Many of our third Lieutenants discovered sudden demands for their services as cooks at headquarters or other detached duties far from the maddening crowd in blue. We conferred the title of "dog robbers" on these cooks.

On the morning of the 22nd of May Grant began a series of desperate charges all along our front, throwing fifty thousand men against our lines, composed of twenty thousand men. The shocks were terrible and for a while it looked as though we would be overwhelmed and trampled under foot by mere force of numbers. However after several bloody and de-

vastating charges the boys in blue concluded they had enough for the once and withdrew in disorder. It was during one of these bloody assaults that a standard-bearer of the enemy reached our breastworks and planted his flag on top and jumped down among our boys unhurt. Many of the boys who saw this said, "This Yankee was loaded with gun powder and whiskey on the inside." But Sargeant Bill swore by the eternal that while it was an insult it was true bravery and we should do him the justice to acknowledge it.

The battle raged for about five hours during which time the enemy, so it was stated at the time, lost twenty thousand men. Nearly all our conscripts and raw volunteers fired their first volley up into the air. But having their attention brought to the fact that the enemy were in front and not flying over-head they did fair execution.

Two days after the assault on our breastworks there was a truce declared, lasting three hours to enable the enemy to bury their dead, which lay thick upon the field, some of them just outside our trenches.

There were many heroic acts performed during this battle. One of the boys picked up one of the enemy's shells with a burning fuse that had dropped among his companions, ran to a pool of water and threw it in, thus extinguishing the fuse and making the shell harmless.

During this truce, although it was contrary to orders, a few of us evaded the guards and repaired to a plum orchard, some distance inside the enemy's lines, where, while filling ourselves with fruit, we ran across several United States Soldiers on a similiar errand. We engaged in friendly conversation, taking pains however to get separated before the truce expired.

The siege went on and the solid shots broke down our embankments

more and more every day. Many of our guns were dismantled, men were dropping every where along the line and rations grew less at every issue until they were finally reduced to one-fourth the prescribed amount. This would have only been an incentive to flight in the open field where victory would bring us the enemy's camp and stores but under the circumstances it only discouraged us. I think the history of the war will show that the Northern troops excelled in building and defending fortifications while we were superior to them in charges and endurance.

Grant's "sappers" gradually extended their trenches nearer and nearer to our lines. His artillery bombarded us and every resource known to modern warfare was brought against us until many became discouraged but with some, the more desperate our conditions grew the more desperate they became. I remember a staff officer, Major Hal Runnels of Houston, who seemed to court death daily. There was a piece of rising ground that was swept continually by shot and shell to such an extent that every one avoided it. But this officer, in passing from headquarters to the trenches, walked on this death trap as calmly as if he were taking a walk in a quiet garden far from the scenes of war. When he reached the trenches I often saw him mount the fortifications to examine the position of the enemy through a field glass while the air was full of shells all around him. I do not know whether he was killed or not but if he escaped he must have been under special protection of the god of war.

Day after day it was reported that General Joseph E. Johnson was coming to our relief and would fall on Grant tomorrow but if tomorrow ever came Johnson did not.

After forty-eight days of constantly watching and fighting on quarter rations our commissary entirely failed.

thus with empty stomachs and our skin from head to heels pricked by the savage body lice, on the morning of July third a lone horseman approached the trenches from the direction of headquarters, leaped his horse over the embankment and unfurled a white flag. This man as brave as Napoleon's guard wept tears of grim despair. With shot and shell sweeping the ground all about him, the horseman sped on with face as white as the flag he bore. (for it was not for victory that his life was imperiled,) and soon disappeared in the enemy's line. The end had come. Thousands of failures had been written by general's, newspaper correspondents, aides and "dog robbers" on the siege of Vicksburg, explaining in a hundred different ways why we were not re-inforced or relieved. The only one that I have to offer is that the political aspirations and bickerings between our commander and the Richmond authorities were the sole cause of the fall of the last stronghold in the Mississippi.

On the morning of the Fourth of July we stacked our arms and marched about a mile to the rear, in the direction of the river, in charge of United States guards. Many were the surmises as to what our fate would be. Visions of close confinement in Northern prisons floated before our eyes while the conscripts shook with fear of immediate execution. For Sargeant Bill had told them that Grant had all conscripts shot.

Late in the afternoon General Grant issued the first full rations we had had in many a day, thus for the second time our whole regiment was fed at the expense of the United States government, but under how different and much more humiliating circumstances than on the former occasion at Shiloh. Many of the boys thought that this kindness shown us was to make the surrender more com-

plete and that it would be counter balanced by added cruelty in the future but I had been in Grant's hands before and knew him to be humane, making war only on those with arms in their hands so was not afraid.

We soon learned that we were to be paroled, and after paying our indebtedness to the inner man with compound interest at usurious rates our cheerfulness gradually began to return.

The few bibles which had been in evidence disappeared. Cards were resumed and dreams of home entered the brains of many of us. Home meant quiet nights and peaceful days, no weary hours on guard,, no shrieking shot or shell. It seemed like the baseless fabric of a dream.

On the eleventh day, having received our parole from the United States authorizing us to go where we pleased and command ourselves according to our own free will, with the exception that we were not to take up arms against the United States until we were exchanged, we marched outside the fortifications and dispersed.

The rank and file of our regiment being exceedingly anxious for a glimpse of the prairies of Texas once more concluded to take advantage of their enforced furlough and visit their old homes in spite of the earnest expectations of Colonel Smith that we would follow him to Raymond, Mississippi where a camp of paroled men had been established. We soon set out on our pedestrain jaunt of three hundred miles which we considered no more than a pleasure excursion after what we had undergone.

With light hearts and light baggage we trudged along like school boys on a holiday, our only drawback being blistered feet. for on account of our long confinement in the trenches at Vicksburg many of the boys' feet had grown tender and discomodated them in their haste to get

home.

After crossing the river all of Company K. except four, including myself concluded to take the lower and shorter route by way of Alexandria, La., while we chose the better but longer way by Natchitoches on Red River. For subsistence we, of course, had to depend upon what we could beg, borrow or steal. However we set out gaily singing "Homeward Bound We Sweetly Glide," trusting in the biblical assurance that "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

We found the people along our route, though illy provided themselves, willing to divide the last morsel with us and we had free access to the fruit which was ripe on the trees, at many places overhanging our road. I remember one feast that came to us in rather an unexpected way. We had stopped for the night in the suburbs of a small village one afternoon before sunset. Having managed in some way to get hold of a canteen of rum we were soon quite jolly. One of my comrads had stretched out for a quiet snooze when I placed a revolver, which we had smuggled out of Vicksburg, on his head for a rest and fired. He arose in a storm of wrath. The other boys began to laugh and yell at us, which attracted the attention of an old gentleman sitting on his porch, who ran out and entered into conversation with us and invited us to spend the night with him. We were well provided for considering the times.

The next morning we took our departure. After twenty days afoot through Louisiana we reached Beaumont, Texas, where we were furnished railroad transportation to Houston. Upon our arrival there we were taken in hand by appreciative citizens, well entertained and our tattered garments replaced with new ones.

From Houston we reached our destination at Texanna in a few hours by

rail and stage and I was once more welcomed beneath the parental vine and fig tree.

About the first of October 1863, we received notice that the Second Texas had been exchanged and was to be reorganized at Houston. Though there was some doubt as to our being regularly exchanged, all the old members fit for duty reported as soon as this order reached them. Our Colonel soon convinced us that our exchange was all right and that we were not going to fight with a rope around each of our necks, for hanging is the punishment meted out to captured soldiers who have broken their parole.

We organized at the same camp about two miles from Houston where two years before we had originally entered into the service of the Confederate States as a regiment. We were at that time volunteers, nearly everyone young and thoughtless, filled with exuberant hopes and strong in the belief that our regiment could wipe the best brigade of Yankees that ever entered the field off the face of the earth any morning before breakfast.

But now what a change had come over the spirit of our dreams. We had fought, starved and laid in prison for two years until our ranks were reduced to two hundred and fifty of the volunteers, who though resolved to stand by our country as long as life stood by us, were without enthusiasm and almost without hope. We had learned many things about war that tended to lessen our zeal for glory thereby, and though we still answered the bugle call promptly, there was no spontaneous hopes of each sounding of its notes that we were to march into battle immediately. Orders that met our approval we obeyed but others we evaded as all old soldiers know well how to do.

Having completed our reorganiza-

tion we were conveyed by rail to Sandy Point and from there marched to Columbia on the Brazos river. Arriving at Columbia we boarded a transport and went down the Brazos to Velasco, for what purpose we never found out as there was no enemy in miles of this place. Some of the boys said that we had probably come down for sea-bathing. It being the middle of winter and our camp being located on a bare beach where we had no protection from the bitter North wind that prevailed, we came near freezing on several occasions. Finally we had orders to move West of the Brazos river about four miles where the country was heavily timbered and we were protected from the wind.

In January 1864 we were removed to Cedar Lake, six miles from the mouth of Caney river where a Fort of the same name was located. This we were to guard. Several gunboats of the blockading fleet were at that time occupying the coast of Texas and had appeared in sight of Fort Caney and it was supposed that the enemy was making preparations to land troops nearby in order to capture the garrison. We were accordingly there to support it. Not long after our arrival two of the Federal Gunboats drew near and began to shell the Fort. Our company was ordered inside but on our remonstrating we were allowed to deploy up and down the beach behind sand hills. The 1 gun in the Fort was soon silenced.

An unexpected treat fell to our lot soon after the firing ceased. The Federal gunboat ran a Spanish sailing vessel in near the Fort where she grounded. The crew, all Cubans, being much frightened, abandoned her and took to the woods. Our officers took possession of the boat and cargo, consisting of coffee, Irish potatoes, salt fish, calico washbowls and pitchers, bar iron and some few barrels besides numbers of cases of various tonics, which we called soothing sy-

rup, consigned to R. & G. Mills of Galveston.

We were ordered by companies to unload the vessel which had now become a wreck and we were promised the usual salvage, one-third of the cargo. Attaching a cable and the whole regiment lending a hand we soon had a suitable position for unloading and in a few hours had taken everything out except the bar iron.

Meanwhile the boys had tested the various brands of soothing syrup which they found to be greatly exhilarating in its effects. However, after continual sampling they discovered it to be overpoweringly intoxicating. In fact by twelve o'clock at night the whole command was stretched on the sands of the beach helplessly drunk, except Major Fly, Sergeant Bill and myself.

On speaking of the matter afterward I placed our Chaplain in the list of the sober but Bill swore that he was as drunk as the rest. However, Bill was prejudiced against this "parson", called him a "one-eyed John who could only see a single side to a question and that to his personal advantage". Bill swore that any man who was too good to associate with the rank and file on earth would desert them on the road to heaven. On the strength of these convictions he refused to hear him preach. Drunk or sober the Chaplain was able to depart the next morning in a cart which he had loaded down with goods from the wreck.

The sun arose at the usual hour after the night of debauch but the regiment failed to greet his returning rays. Many of them were all day getting on their feet. There was visible of the cargo next day after unloading, six or seven barrels of tonic, one-fourth of the coffee and crockery ware, the remainder having been buried in the sand by the boys who were so drunk at the time that very

little of it was ever recovered, they not being able to remember the hiding places after they became sober.

General Bee sent wagons down and hauled off the remaining barrels and coffee, kindly leaving us the bowls, pitchers, the proper use of which would no doubt have improved our appearances but as he failed to furnish clean towels and soap to go with them we failed to appreciate their value.

About this time two of our conscripts, no doubt recognizing their ignorance of dynasties and with praise-worthy zeal to rise in a chosen (by others) profession concluded to begin an individual investigation of these forces, each for himself. Procuring two charged shells from the Fort they proceeded to experiment. One of the shells was placed at the roots of a large tree, and reaching around from behind one of the "students" touched the fuse with a lighted torch. The shell went off and so did two of the investigators fingers. The other daring seeker after knowledge of things military, placed his shell under a rude board and stood upon it while he applied the torch. The result was a rapid ascension skyward in which I fear the victim came nearer reaching heaven than he ever will again. Strange to say this fellow returned to earth intact and unhurt except for slight bruises. The explosion made a terrific noise and caused quite a commotion. This was the first conscript we had ever seen elevated from the ranks. I always thought that this fellow was what Josh Billings would call a "dam phul."

We remained two or three months in this section when we marched to Houston where we took railroad for Galveston which place we reached about the middle of April 1864.

we were assigned to post duty upon our arrival at Galveston and remained there until the close of the war. General McCruder, commander of the forces on Galveston Island, had his headquarters in the city and our duties consisted in guarding these together with the quartermaster and commissary stores. In the intervals of guard duty we occupied our time trying to drill something like soldierly bearing into our raw conscripts in order to make them fit for the next war. Most of us had then lost all hope of the present one, for seeing that the complete subjugation of the Confederacy was only a matter of a few months, we soon gave up trying to make any improvements in the awkward squads of conscripts when assigned to drill them.

We were never molested by the enemy while on Galveston Island. Our nearest approach to battle was with our own men when we were called out one night to protect Col. Hawes quarters from the assault of a mob, composed of resident soldiers and their families. These soldiers demanded that the government issue rations to their starving wives and children, which being refused on account of the depleted condition of our commissaries, had come in a riotous mob to secure provisions by force if persuasion did not avail.

No one who has not seen a mob of this kind clamoring for bread can have any conception of the crazed and uncontrollable rage of the participants or appreciate the difficulty of quieting them without the shedding of blood. However by promising to see that the women and children would be fed and ordering a company to fire over the heads of the mob our officers finally quelled the riot with only one man injured who was accidentally killed by some one's awkwardness in firing.

Here I took part in the first and

only military execution I witnessed during the war. A private of German parentage belonging to an artillery company of Col. Cook's regiment was shot for desertion. He had made two former attempts to desert and it was at last decided to make an example of him. Our regiment was assigned to guard the prisoner at the execution, out three miles from town. On reaching the appointed place three regiments were drawn up forming three sides of a parallelogram all facing inward. The deserter was marched along in front of the entire line and when the open end was reached, halted and the firing squad marched forward and fired.

The squad consisted of twelve men, the half of whose guns were loaded with powder and ball, the remaining six guns being charged with blank cartridges. None of the squad knew whether he fired a blank or a ball.

After the execution we were marched by where the body lay dead upon the ground in order to impress upon our minds the penalty for desertion.

This man was the last whom I saw killed during the war. But we were attacked during the summer of 1864 by a silent and insidious enemy against which our heaviest guns availed nothing. The yellow fever invaded our camp and soon became epidemic, carrying off numbers who had courted death on numerous battlefields and endured the hardships of many campaigns, only to succumb at last to this dreaded scourge. This was a time that tried men's souls beyond the test of battle shouts. No surging crowds of men to urge one on to victory or death yet now what heroic bravery it required to sit alone through the sad silent watches of the night beside a plague-stricken comrad's bed and minister to the dying wants of one who's very breath exhaled death into the surrounding at-

mosphere. But men were found in camp and women too in the city whose thoughts of self were drowned in other's cup of trembling so that not one was left to suffer and die alone.

And here during this epidemic was displayed equally as much heroism if not more than is required to go into battle both by soldiers and also the good women of the city, true heroines indeed who so kindly cared for and ministered to the sick and dying soldiers. I am sometimes inclined to agree with that fellow over the river who said: "Woman is the finishing grace of creation, the completeness of man's bliss and paradise his companion, councilor and comforter in his pilgrimage through life. Our sweetest cup of earthly happiness is mixed and ministered by her hands and in heaven we will bless our creator for her aid in reaching

that blissful state." Please excuse this digression.

Nothing of an eventful nature occurred to us during 1864. The opening of the spring of 1865 brought with it the downfall of the Confederacy and the few of us left returned to our homes emancipated after four years from the restraints of military life, which we enjoyed very much.

The war has been over forty-six years and it is only the volunteer soldier who fully realizes the changed conditions. They are heavenly indeed now in comparison. General Sherman properly defined war when he said that it was the opposite of heaven. This is the opinion of

RALPH J. SMITH.

Company K, Second Texas Infantry, born at Centerville, St. Mary's parish, La., July 19th, 1840. Now resident of San Marcos, Hays County Texas.



TO THE DAUGHTERS OF THE CONFEDERACY.

An Insight Into the Character of a Volunteer Soldier.

I was a Volunteer soldier. I have ever loved the word Volunteer and have detested the word Conscript. It takes a volunteer soldier to discriminate between the two. The comparison is like a team composed of a lazy mule and a spirited horse. Each is actuated by a different motive. The volunteer goes of his own free will; the conscript is coerced.

I was in my 21st year when I volunteered in the Confederate service. I was so good and so green that my pa thought something of making a preacher of me but I told him that the boys were all volunteering and that I was going to volunteer too. Lots of girls kissed me good bye as I had three sisters and one sweet-heart. Two young ladies each made me a present one of a bible and the other of a rather insignificant one that I was loath to take, but took it as she said that I would need it, and I did, so much so that it soon wore out. The lady who gave me the bible exacted two promises of me, one was to quit swearing and the other was to read my bible, which I did. And no doubt this contributed to my moral welfare, as I did not let a day pass that I did not secretly petition our Creator for his care and protection and I verily believe that all intelligent soldiers did the same, especially in active service, for the fatalities that were constantly occurring inspired them with a desire for His protection.

Well, we organized a company with Clark L. Owens as our captain, a man fifty-five years old and a Christian gentleman. We went direct to Houston and joined the Second Texas Infantry, commanded by Colonel John C. Moore, a West Point grad-

uate and a brave and gallant officer but not a Christian, for he was red-headed, red-bearded, red-faced, and extremely high-tempered. It was only a short time until I had strong suspicions that I had joined a regiment of devils. In every regiment of volunteer soldiers there is a strong vein of humor that is ever present and never absent even in the thickest of battle. To show you how quickly they can go from the very serious to the very ridiculous I will describe this scene.

My regiment was doing post duty and was appointed to escort the remains of Colonel Thomas F. Lubbock from the depot down in town. He was placed in a public building and lay in state and while his citizen and soldier friends were going in and viewing him the regiment was lined up in the street listening to a rosebud orator enlogizing. He began in this way: "Thomas F. Lubbock is dead, dead," repeating this three times. He spoke about one hour and when the regiment moved off immediately some wag started the ball to rolling by repeating his first words which went down the regiment, two-thirds of the boys joining in. This was the most ridiculous scene I ever witnessed. Of course, the regiment was disgraced in the eyes of the friends of Colonel Lubbock and the citizens of Houston were glad when we left, which we did on the 22nd of March 1862, going direct to Tennessee, reaching there in time to engage in the battle of Shiloh which was fought on the 6th and 7th of April. It was this first day's fight that convinced me that I was right in my conclusions for my regiment fought like devils incarnate. This was the biggest revival I ever witnessed. There was great rejoicing for with an army one-third less than that of the enemy we drove them to the Tennessee river and many a poor fellow took his last bath in his efforts to cross. We also cap-

tured their entire commissary and quarter-master's stores and ate supper and breakfast off their commissaries and but for the death of our general late that evening we would have captured the entire army.

The next day, the 7th was revival day for the federals, for General Buell on the night of the 6th crossed over with forty thousand fresh troops. I was wounded and left on the battle field and am prepared to advise all young men going into battle to avoid being shot in the left leg below the knee. I was not in a position to see how fast the boys moved to the rear but understood they made a good record for speed, which was wise under the circumstances.

I was taken direct to St. Louis and placed in McDowell's College and kindly cared for. I stayed three months and of course learned a great deal and but for the reason that I did not make sufficient progress or some other reason they sent me to the penitentiary at Alton, Illinois, where I stayed three months longer. I enjoyed this more than in College for I had more room for exercise and soon recruited sufficiently to throw away my crutches and mingle with the 1200 other prisoners and enjoy their association. If you will excuse me for taking you to the penitentiary I will bring you out again and to be brief will say that I was soon with my regiment.

There is much to be learned of the volunteer soldier. For four years I heard every subject under the sun cussed and discussed except automobiles, aeroplanes and hobble skirts I do not know why the boys did not think of these.

Now my friends, not desiring to weary your patience I will conclude with a few more thoughts. The demoralizing conditions that the civil war created, both in the army and at

home, are unpleasant memories. I might elaborate on these largely but will refrain from doing so and simply inform you, and would have you believe me, conditions as they exist today are heavenly indeed in comparison. And I would urge that all be interested in the dissemination of the Christian religion and Christian education and of course the making of good and wholesome laws for the benefit of the conscript and conditions will be created that I am sure will more likely meet with divine approval than another civil war. The volunteer Confederate soldier and Volunteer soldier of the cross is all O. K. The Volunteer soon becomes immune to that disease called acute verdancy. Not so the conscript, for he is lacking in independence and is perpetually under the tutorage of the other fellow.

I thank you ladies for your attention and may happiness ever attend you, may nothing disturb your pure thoughts and may you ever be lovely and pretty are the wishes of my heart.

WAR NOT JUSTIFIABLE.

(Written during the Spanish-American War)

That divinely instituted law of free moral agency is as applicable to an aggregation of men as to the individual man, and when a collection of men assemble together and devise plans for war, claiming it to be justifiable and having the sanction of divinity is equally as absurd to my mind as for two individuals to become antagonistic and settle their grievances by resorting to arms, resulting perhaps

in the death of I, and the victorious party claiming the Lord was on his side. When a man's individual domain is threatened by an armed foe, he is justified in defending it, even if he has to destroy life in doing so. And when a nation's territory is invaded by an armed force, then, and only then, is she justified in resisting and making war on the invader and it would be cowardice and want of patriotism not to do so, and under these conditions only, if ever, the leaders might claim divine direction or sanction. The demoralizing effect of war and the absence of piety and the unfavorable conditions for such in armed forces, and the wickedness and vice necessarily created in engaging in the avocation of a soldier is conclusive evidence that the creator has nothing to do with war.

There is, we admit, an overruling providence that is constantly operating on lives and hearts of nations or men that constitute nations, but providence is only guiding and directing those who submit to his laws.

In order to be properly qualified to become a soldier and a formidable antagonist, there is seemingly implanted in the mind a hatred of the foe, controlling characteristic of the Creator and producing in the human breast an element that is antagonistic to what we are tutored to believe is the controlling characteristic of the Creator, that is love and mercy. We admit there have been a few exceptions to this rule; in a few isolated cases our warrior leaders have maintained their proper allegiance to the creator while prosecuting a war. These only are the true heroes, and these only should be enlogized.

The natural tendency of a soldier life, judging from a four year observation and experience, is demoralization, so much so that in our opinion a company of preachers would be taking a lot of chances of becoming demoralized, especially in a war of extended duration. Preachers used to be very fond of citing instances

and telling of what a great life preserver the Bible is by carrying in it the breast pocket. The old soldier knows how this is done -- the conscript or cowardly soldier during an engagement has frequently been known to hide in the brush and read the Bible or deck of cards more often the latter, instead of being in the fight. By this means his life was preserved.

Because good accrues to men or nations as a result of war is no evidence of its justness or righteousness or that the creator sanctions it. We may be lured into the belief that He does because pecuniary advantages and moral achievements arise from it. If Tom shoots down poor Bill, there will also be pecuniary benefits, especially if Bill's life is insured. His widow is established in business and started on the road to prosperity. This is frequently the case and it would be extremely absurd to say that the Lord was on Tom's side.

While we believe that right and justice will ultimately prevail the Lord seems from observation to be on the side of the strongest and best equipped. Two of the ablest men and statesmen the world has ever produced were Gladstone and Bismark. The former not only opposed war except in case of invasion, but averted it when possible and when precipitated used means to stop its prosecution.

The latter in his last days acknowledged that he had been instrumental in bringing about three wars, saw how they could have been averted and regretted he had not stopped them.

The American people as well as the English would do well to emulate the example of these two statesmen. But then, despite the dire consequences of war, it seems history has to repeat itself. The greed for Gold love of conquest, fame and adventure must be gratified; that ambitious element which is so closely allied to the brute must be gratified, so that our warrior leaders, Gen. Theopolis Dolittle and

and others, may have their brows crowned with laurels and have colossal marble monuments erected in their memory.

It is even claimed that in going 900 miles from home to the Philippine Islands to find a foe to conquer, is justifiable from a moral standpoint. Catholicism being the dominant religion our D.D.'s claim it is oppressive, and we are justifiable in slaughtering large percentage of the population in order to make the remainder accept our version of the gospel regardless of the loss of the lives of several thousand of our young men in so doing 'the cream of the nation'. We cannot become reconciled to the principle of forcible christianity. If we could we would favor shooting it into some of our home folks.

GENEALOGY OF THE SMITH FAMILY.

Ralph Smith, San Marcos,

At the first glance at this heading the reader would justly conclude that the writer had assumed to himself an herculean task, but as my object is to give in brief a biography of my own family ancestors, excluding all of the name of John Smith, there being none so called in my ancestry, the task will seem easier.

My father Alfred Smith, was born Merch 29th 1810 in the state of Louisiana, and died August 16th 1889, in Jackson county Texas. I have no record of my mother's birth or death, but she lived to be 65 years old. The writer was born July 19th 1840 at Centerville, La. My grandfather, Henry Johannon Smith, was born and reared in the state of Maine. He was a keeper of a light house on the coast of La., and while engaged in this avocation was drowned when my father was a ten year old boy. My father's mother was of Irish parentage, her family name was Armstrong. She liv-

ed to be 80 years old. My mother's parents, Wm H. Cook and Martha Cook, for whom my mother was named, were natives of Ohio in which state my mother was reared at the town of Milledgeville. This grandmother lived to be 70 years old. My grandfather Cook lived to be 87 years old and served in the war of 1812. He lived until I was near grown and often deeply interested me by repeating his recollections of the war, and inspiring me with a great desire to become a soldier. I feared then the opportunity would never come but it did come I had three first cousins that sprung from a branch of this Cook family, their names being William Henry Harrison, Benjamin Abijah Curtis, and Zachariah Taylor Cook. Being unable to tote such names for long, they necessarily passed away early in life. Some very noted characteristics of my antecedents were that they were all born with their eyes open, none had fits, and none of them ever were hung, went to jail, the penitentiary or the legislature. All were big caters, and some successful in leading a mule to water or driving a cow down a lane. Of all my ancestors that I have any knowledge none lived always some succumbed to disease while others more fortunate lived until their machinery wore out and submitted to that irrevocable decree of the Creator, and went the way of all mankind. Some were heroes in war, but as hero worship is of modern creation and not the fad then as now no colossal marble monument marks the grave of my ancestors. A first cousin of my father's whom all readers of Texas history remember, took an active part in driving the enemy from Texas soil; I allude to Erasmus Smith commonly known as Deaf Smith. I have often heard my father refer to him they having been raised together.

In the spring of 1852 when I was twelve years old my father with his family immigrated to Texas aboard

a sail vessel, landing at the old town of Indianola, when transferring our plunder to a steam boat we had the honor of being a party to ascension of the first steam vessel up the Navi-da river to old Texanna, head of navigation and our future home, getting in proximity to this little village in early morning hours, the boat began a series of sharp and loud whistles which resulted in effecting a complete stampede of natives and stock. Some white folks, all the niggers, hogs, cattle, hogs, dogs scampered off to the prairie no doubt concluding that the judgement day had come.

My first recollection of a school house was that the inside wall was adorned with holes. I was frequently caused to stand on one foot with back in left hand the index finger of my right hand inserted in a hole in the wall and in this attitude I had to learn my lesson. If I failed, which I often did I was conducted to or near the center of the school house and for further punishment placed on a dunce block with a dunce cap on my head and leather spectacles on my eyes, in this condition I had to endure the scrutinizing gaze of the entire school, which was humiliating indeed. Fortunately for me there was sufficient sympathy manifested for me to encourage me to make some heroic efforts to master my task. I succeeded to that extent that divorced me forever from these modes of punishment.

My first recollections of preaching was in a school house; the advent of the parson was looked to with joy, the men would herald it abroad, the women would cry aloud "the parson is a comin' or comin'."

Now we have massive church buildings in every town with clear sounding bells proclaiming the coming of the Sabbath day, and parsons are thicker than cotton tail rabbits.

My early recollections of a Christmas dinner was that it consisted of baked possum, sliced potato pie and ginger cake, washed down with por-

simmon beer. Now we have virgin pullets, turkey and cranberry sauce, chicken and salmon salad, metropolitan and angel cake, and other numerous delicacies.

And the popular theme of the day is the heroes of the war who are eulogized even from the pulpits. For shame when if these heroes, many of them, could have their just deserts, would have a similar inscription on their tombstones as that furnished to old K Keel by an Indian poet, thusly:
There was man who died of late,

For whom the angels did impatiently wait.

With on stretched wings of love

To waft him to the realms above.

But while the engels were hovering in the skies.

And disputing over the prize,

In slipped the devil like a weasel,

And down to hades he carried Keisel.

RECOLLECTION OF MY BOYHOOD DAYS.

At the earnest request of an old lady friend and school mate who insists that I write something of my boyhood and young manhood days. I have decided to give to the public something that came under my observation and to which I was an eyewitness, and which I have not the least idea that not another man in Hays County ever witnessed a like scene.

About the year 1856 there came from South Carolina a bachelor man, possibly thirty-five years old, with six negroes and other property. He bought an unimproved tract of timbered land about fifteen miles from old Texanna in Jackson county, moved on it with his negroes and began clearing it up, or had his negro slaves to do so while he followed buying and selling horses and was frequently absent for several weeks.

At the time of the circumstance that I desire to mention he had been

absent several months and his nearest neighbors had begun to have strong suspicions that something had happened to him and commenced to make some investigations which resulted in the arrest and incarceration in the county jail of three negro men and one woman. Shortly after being placed in jail they all confessed to the killing of their master. Their names were: Zeke who was a preacher and John and Jack the oldest, a man of herculean strength six feet three inches in height. And he was the "gentleman" who wielded the ax that sent his master into eternity while he was asleep in the clearing with his saddle for a pillow in the middle of the day.

They threw his body into a brush pile and burned it to ashes and it was said that everything burned up but his heart and we boys and many men were superstitious enough to believe this rot. Possibly it was so as it might have been made of stone. It was currently reported that this man, before moving to Texas, had a live negro placed in a coffin and made 2 other negroes saw him in two with a cross-cut saw. I suppose that he died for no human being could stand such an operation as that and live.

I cannot vouch for the truth of the above but from my viewpoint of things now if this man practiced one-half of the cruelty that these poor slaves accused him of he undoubtedly got his just deserts.

Well in due course of time the three men were condemned to be publicly hung. The jury that tried the woman failed to agree as one man on it would not consent to hang a woman, so she was finally liberated. The three men had their usual thirty days to prepare for their final departure in which time the different preachers had them in charge and administered spiritual consolation to them, by which I have no doubt they were very much benefited.

At any rate by the day of execution

they were extremely happy and each one was placed upon his own coffin in a wagon and moved off under a strong guard of armed men to the gallows one-mile off in the open post oak wood and near a public road.

As they were marched to the place they sang all the way some old bible hymn with a crowd of us school boys as hearers. On reaching the gallows they found waiting the largest crowd of white men and negroes of both sexes I ever saw together, the negroes being coerced to see the sight. If any was left behind at home it was dead ones and babies.

The three men were made to ascend to the top and on the trap door and each given a few minutes to talk. Old Jack and John made short speeches but Zeke, the preacher, made quite a lengthy speech, all claiming to be en route to heaven.

When the drop was made Jack's and John's necks were broken but Zeke's was not and it seemed as though he would not give it up and struggled fearfully, his feet moving with astonishing rapidity which excited an old colored lady who exclaimed in a moment of rapture: "Dat nigger sho' been a good dancer in his day."

Notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion this uncalled for outburst brought some smiles to the boys.

From young manhood up I have ever been irresistibly drawn toward preachers, especially negro preachers, therefore I got to within ten feet of Zeke so I heard all he said and altho a thoughtless boy I was impressed with it, too much so for my good, for I could see these dead negroes for a month afterward, especially after eating a big supper.

This spot of ground became sacred so much so that the public road was changed and no man, white or black ever got near it, day or night, except one of my chums who claimed to ride near the spot often on dark nights and was not the least

bit afraid, as he would go by whistling. His name was Ananias No. 2. Many were the ghosts afterward seen in the vicinity.

Well, the village doctor bought the body of big Jack with the intention of making a skeleton for exhibition. Of course this interested all the boys and we looked forward to the time with eagerness and impatience to the time when we would see this curiosity. Well the time came. Some man rode to the school house and reported to us that the doctor had Jack's bones together. We boys dismissed the school, leaving the teacher in charge of the girls, and belted for the doctor's office in a run, some three hundred yards off. On our arrival the doctor told us that we would find what we wanted in a closet in the rear of his office.

A few of us approached the place and peeped in. There we saw Jack's bones all together in a box, where they remained only a short time and then were dumped into the Navidad river. The Doctor was not as brave as he thought and had no notion of staying in his office with Jack's skeleton.

We boys always thought our teacher was the principal actor in planning this April Fool scheme for our benefit for he was a jolly good fellow when not in school trying to hammer some book sense into our thick heads.

Well when the negroes were set free the ghost disappeared from the land. I have never seen a ghost since the civil war, for which I thank the Lord.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 704 536 9