

Confederate Veteran.

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BOY SOLDIERS OF THE CONFEDERACY.

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Some of the unique and distinctive incidents of our Confederate history are slipping into oblivion. Shall we let them go and allow the gallant names which are associated with them to be forgotten, or shall we realize that all the South gained by four years of bitter war is the record of its heroes? Some of these stories, which the boys and girls cannot find this year for their programs because the books in which they are written have become rare, would fit so perfectly into the tales of chivalry, that Cœur de Lion would have enjoyed telling them on some starry night in Palestine; and if we found them in the pages of Sir Thomas Mallory we would all prize them and tell them to our children. No one knows the exact date when King Arthur ruled in Britain, but it was certainly before the Roman Conquest, which places it in the vicinity of two thousand years ago. If I had chosen for the Children of the Confederacy program twelve subjects from the lives and adventures of the Knights of the Round Table, all the data would have been perfectly accessible. If I had chosen that great classic of antiquity, the Trojan War, any good encyclopedia would have supplied sufficient details for those who did not care to consult the many translations of Homer and Vergil; but when I chose a few names of boy soldiers of the Confederacy, heroes of a conflict which closed just fifty-seven years ago, a great and mighty wail comes to me per post, and I have a presentiment that the wailers are probably the only people who are conscientiously willing to attempt that difficult, and, it would seem, impossible, thing of finding out a few facts about events which are familiar to veterans now living.

First comes the question: Is the Historian General aware of the fact that "Boy Soldiers of the Confederacy," by Mrs. Susan R. Hull, is out of print? Anyone who knows anything about books of that kind will hazard two guesses: they are either out of print or going out of print, and they are never, never going back into print. This is pretty nearly an axiom in Southern literature. But the fact that a book cannot be bought except by the patient booklover does not mean that it has disappeared. Somewhere those books can be located, sometimes in private libraries, often in State libraries, and frequently in the lists sent out by those who specialize, like the Ruebush-Elkins Co., of Dayton, Va., in certain lines of historical work. The real object of the Historian General was to call attention to the fact that we are permitting the young people of our country to seek their inspirations in alien lands. Their spiritual homes will be across the sea in New England. There is not now, and there has never been, in the entire South any periodical which ranks with *The Youth's Companion* or *St. Nicholas* for juveniles. Even the little Sunday school papers we use are apt to carry the Chicago postmark. The

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inevitable result is that stories of the boys in gray are conspicuously absent from current literature. If we can call them back from this mental exile and teach them that honor and courage have always been the high virtues of the South, we establish for them a standard by which they can estimate the true values of life, and we implant in their hearts the compelling tradition of a hereditary knighthood whose accolade is won by character, and by character alone.

With this preamble, explaining the wherefore of the C. of C. program, I shall briefly relate the stories which compose the May and June subjects, and in succeeding numbers of the *VETERAN* I shall take up "Jack Jouet's Ride" and the "Immortal Six Hundred."

When Arkansas seceded, as a result of the call for troops by President Lincoln to coerce the seven Confederate States to return to the Union, the boys of St. John's College, at Little Rock, in age from fourteen to nineteen years, enlisted in the 1st Arkansas Regiment, and their teachers became officers in the regiment. Virginia seceded for the same reason, and the capital of the Confederacy was moved from Montgomery to Richmond. Very soon it was apparent that Virginia would be invaded, for the cry, "On to Richmond," was the slogan of the Federal armies which were rapidly assembling. The 1st Arkansas entrained for the Virginia camps and became a part of the command which Stonewall Jackson made immortal—perhaps he would say which made him immortal—for Jackson always insisted that the name Stonewall belonged to the brigade. The first real battle of the war in which they took part was on July 20 and 21, 1861, at Manassas, sometimes called Bull Run. The best account of Jackson's campaigns is found in "Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War," by Col. G. F. R. Henderson, of the British army.

Jackson was the most truthful of men, but when it came to military tactics he could deceive in a way to make a confirmed liar feel paltry. For instance, on July 18, he marched out of Winchester in exactly the opposite direction from his real destination. After advancing a few miles, the men were halted, and the following order was read to them: "Our gallant army, under General Beauregard, is now attacked by overwhelming numbers. The commanding general hopes that his troops will step out like men and make a forced march to save the country." It was on that night, when the men sank to sleep exhausted, that Jackson's attention was called to the fact that no pickets had been placed around the bivouac. "Let the poor fellows sleep; I will guard the camp myself," was the reply, and through the long night watches he was the sole sentinel on duty.

The celerity with which the 1st Arkansas marched earned for them from President Davis and General Beauregard the proud title of "Jackson's Foot Cavalry," and they were allowed to inscribe it upon their banner. While the brigade lay awaiting attack, in the hot July sun which shone upon Manassas, the boys from Arkansas noticed a spring not far

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from the lines, right under fire of the Federal batteries. Three of them, under sixteen, names unknown, volunteered to fill some canteens with water. Cautiously they advanced, but not so cautiously as to escape the eye of the Federal gunners, and there was a flash and a roar from the cannon. The spring was safely reached, the canteens filled, and there remained the simple little matter of returning through a barrage aimed at them. But the firing had ceased, and from the battery a blue rider advanced, waved his hat at the boys, and, accompanied by the cheers of friend and foe, the boys regained their lines and the thirsty Confederates drank the water, which must have reminded them of another soldier, centuries ago, who wished for the water from the well in Bethlehem, and poured it out as an oblation because his three valiant men had put their lives in jeopardy to obtain it.

After three years the 1st Arkansas Regiment had their revenge, the kind which is sweetest. At the battle of Kenesaw, on June 27, 1864, their colonel, W. H. Martin, observed that the woods in front of his position were on fire and the wounded Federal soldiers lying in them would be burned. He tied a handkerchief around his ramrod, and, mounting the parapet, he waved this miniature flag of truce and shouted to the enemy: "Come and remove your wounded; they are burning to death. We will not fire a gun until you get them away. Be quick." Confederates and Federals mingled in the work of rescue, and a Federal major was so impressed that he drew from his belt a brace of pistols and presented them to Colonel Martin, saying: "Accept them with my appreciation of the nobility of this deed. It deserves to be perpetuated to the deathless honor of every one of you concerned in it; and should you fight a thousand other battles, and win a thousand other victories, you will never win another so noble as this."

There was a battery known as Parker's Boy Battery, composed of boys from Maryland and Georgia, which advanced into Pennsylvania with Lee, and, when the retreat began after the battle of Gettysburg, they remained in position, holding back the enemy because it never occurred to them that an unsupported battery had been left. A Confederate officer rode up and asked Captain Parker why he had not retired. He replied that he had no orders to do so. Immediately giving the order, the Boy Battery slowly obeyed and followed the long gray lines, the officers still facing the foe until distance hid them from view. This was not any burning deck and has not inspired poetry, but it was just as fine a proof of fidelity and discipline.

John Krenson, of Savannah, was the boy who could not leave before the battle. In this day of evasion and side-stepping, it is good to remember this Georgia boy, who was a true bondsman of duty. John Krenson fought in the battle of Manassas, was wounded, and returned home on furlough. Learning that McClellan was in sight of Richmond with a great army, he went back, but was given an honorable discharge, because he was not strong enough for active service.

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He reported to his regiment just the same, for he wished to help in the battle, and died on the skirmish line at Mechanicsville among the first who fell.

Henry Albert Roby, of Baltimore, like many another Maryland boy, slipped across the Potomac and joined the Confederate army. He was just eighteen. He was assigned to the 1st Maryland Regiment, and at Gettysburg he distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry. The caisson to the gun had been lost, and Roby got ammunition for it under fire. He fought to the end of the war, and when the Spanish-American war came he wrote a poem calling on blue and gray to fight together. One does not worry about the meter of that kind of a war poet.

Thomas Jackson Waters, also of Maryland, joined the Virginia cavalry when he was eighteen years old. He was captured and sent first to the old Capitol Prison and then transferred to Point Lookout. How to escape is the perennial thought of all prisoners. Two of his companions were discussing plans to get away by swimming the Potomac. Waters said he could not swim. They offered to help him, and so the trio eluded the guard, concealed themselves on the bank of the river, and when night came each secured a plank and started across the darkling waters. About halfway over the two men said: "Well, good-by, Waters; every man for himself." There he was, with a plank between him and eternity. He held on, however, in a prayerful frame of mind, no doubt, and was washed ashore about dawn on the secession side of the river. The two companions landed almost simultaneously, and all rejoined their commands. Waters fought through the war and lived many years afterwards, always loyal to the cause he had chosen.

These are just a few flowers gathered in the asphodel fields of Memory and should not be allowed to fade. There are hundreds more which establish an unsurpassed roll of valor.

A boy soldier lay ready for a dangerous operation in a hospital where Miss Emily V. Mason was nursing. She was a Christian and spoke to him of his condition, adding, "Don't you think you had better make your peace with God?" He answered: "When a boy dies in defense of his country, he has made his peace with God already."

So we would fain believe, and as these warrior saints, crowned with eternal youth, pass beyond our ken, we picture them as faring forth with Percival and Galahad upon some nobler quest beyond the walls of paradise.