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Reminiscences

J. G. Deupree

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Reminiscences

Being Stories Told by Veterans of The War Between The States

J. G. DEUPREE.

This week's reminiscences is in the form of a letter written by Prof. J. G. Deupree, of Jackson, Mississippi, a cousin of Dr. T. J. Deupree, of this city. The communication is a copy of a personal letter written by the former to his father, April 11, 1863, and is a chronicle of a battle between Confederate and Federal forces just before the battle of Franklin.

Prof. Deupree, who now is 73 years of age, is a retired professor and a beneficiary of the Carnegie Foundation which pays him a pension. He has been commissioned to write the history of the first Mississippi cavalry and especially of the three commands sent from Noxubee county to the Confederate army.

At the outbreak of the Civil War he was a member of the graduating class of Howard College, Marion, Alabama, but responded to the call for volunteers and enlisted. He lacked but two months of his graduation. Two years ago Prof. Deupree, with about thirty-five or forty other ex-Confederates who left the Howard College to enter the army, were present at the graduating exercises of Howard College, now located at Birmingham, and was given his diploma. He also delivered the class oration.

For a number of years Prof. Deupree was the president of the Okolon Female Seminary, Okolona, Mississippi, and in the later years was professor of mathematics in Mississippi college.

Letter from J. G. Deupree to his father, Daniel Deupree, published in the Macon Beacon, April 29th, 1863 follows:

"In camp, near Springhill, Tenn.
April 11, 1863

"Dear Pa: Thinking you will doubtless hear of the terrible little battle in which Cosby's Brigade was engaged on yesterday, and knowing that you will be exceedingly uneasy until you can hear definitely of casualties in our regiment, I write a once. To dissipate your uneasiness I will state no one was seriously hurt in the Noxubee squadron.

"About 10 o'clock yesterday morning, our brigade, in advance, supplied with two days' rations and forty rounds of ammunition, began its march towards Franklin, to make a reconnaissance, in force, to determine whether or not the enemy were really evacuating their works on Harpeth river, as reported by scouts and citizens.

"As usual, our regiment was put in front to drive in the Federal pickets and outposts. Within two miles of Franklin we discovered a small force of hostile cavalry strongly posted on Winston Hills. We advanced on them at a gallop; they fled precipitately, without firing, or being fired on. We pursued closely till within half a mile of Franklin. There they rallied, supported by two or more companies of infantry, and checked our further advance in that direction.

"At this point, one man was killed in Taylor's company and one wounded in Craven's. Col. Pinson, seeing the

strength of their position, and not being able to learn their exact numbers, concealed as they were behind the brow of the hill, immediately dispatched a courier to state the facts to the general and to demand reinforcements.

"Orders came to move to the right and, if possible, to turn the enemy's flank and thus dislodge him.

"We had gone one-fourth of a mile east of the pike, when we were thrown into line to receive the charge of a party of Federal cavalry. But as soon as we began to move towards them, they wisely "turned tail" and moved off rapidly.

"At this time, General Van Dorn, attended by his own and General Jackson's escort, appeared on the field. Our regiment was here divided; the major part moving farther east under Maj. Wheeler, being dismounted, and placed in position in the woods, were briefly engaged, but without loss, as each man was protected by a tree or stump; the remainder of the regiment, companies D, I, and C, led by Col. Pinson in person, charged across an open field, 100 yards in width, for the purpose of cutting the enemy, supposed to be in small force on the opposite edge of the field.

"The Federals, concealed by a slight elevation of ground, awaited till we were within 75 or 100 yards of them, when they arose, about 500 strong, and poured a galling fire into our ranks, doing dreadful execution in regard to horses.

"We halted and calmly stood the fire, without being able to return it as our guns had been discharged. We then retired deliberately about 100 yards, when we were halted and again prepared for another charge upon the enemy. We charged desperately, but the result was as before.

"Pinson dispatched to Van Dorn that it was impossible, when so outnumbered, to dislodge the enemy, and received this reply, which I know to be true, as Latt bore the message: 'Hold your position as long as possible; you shall be reinforced.'

"In order to hold the position, Pinson again charged but with like results. As my horse was rapidly growing weak from loss of blood from a wound he received in the first charge, I received orders from Jeff commanding the company as we began the third charge, to fall back to the rear, and this order I obeyed with alacrity. I was immediately joined by Latt and others with wounded horses.

"The loss in our company in these three charges was: Bill Jackson wounded in the chin, four horses killed and as many wounded. The other three companies suffered about as ours.

"Soon Starker's regiment, commanded by Maj. Jones, came up in gallant style to the support of Pinson, forming on the left. Then Ballentine formed left of the pike. A charge was immediately made, and the Federals were routed and driven into town. Maj. Jones and Col. Ballentine followed them through the streets, doing

dreadful execution.

"The Federals succeeded in crossing Harpeth River under cover of their artillery, by which our cavalry was driven from the town, after having collected a considerable amount of Yankee plunder.

"Had not many Federal infantry taken refuge in the court house and other brick buildings and thence kept up a brisk fire of small arms we should have doubtless brought off many prisoners.

"We remained in the vicinity of Franklin, keeping the enemy beyond the Harpeth till late in the day, when we withdrew into camp.

"I will repeat here the losses of our First Mississippi companies: Bill Jackson, wounded slightly in the chin; Montague's, Holberg's, Pagan's and J. Hudson's horses killed. Latt's and mine so seriously wounded that they have since been condemned; Tom Brooks' horse slightly wounded; Jeff, Sam Day, and Billy Foote all escaped, gallantly and nobly leading the men in every charge; company A lost one man killed, two wounded by a grape-shot, and suffered in horse flesh about as ours; Company E had one man killed; company C lost one man killed and four wounded; companies D and J each lost four men wounded, and their loss in horses not quite so great as ours; company F had J. J. Hunter wounded in the foot.

"Starke's regiment lost eleven men killed and forty-two wounded. Ballentine lost none.

"I acknowledge my gratitude to God for His preserving care in answer to the prayers of loved ones at home.

"Affectionately,

JOHN.

Dr. T. J. Deupree, of 910 East Tenth street, this city, was the commander of this company to which his cousin, J. G. Deupree, belonged, and in the action recorded was struck in the knee by a ricochet minnie ball. Fortunately for him, no bones were broken nor blood drawn; hence he was not reported as one of the wounded. An ugly black bruise remained on his shin for many days.

left that institution, and is now called the Kaiser Wilhelm II University."

The German military system is well calculated to develop the kind of demens, who occupy the trenches, are being attacked and taken by the armies of the allies. Privates enter at the age of 20. Men may volunteer at 18, but when they do so they must be the equivalent of high school graduates before they will be considered. There is no such thing as illiteracy in the ranks of the German army. Even after they have been enrolled, every day during their period of service is a school day. Every company has its teachers, corresponding to corporals in the United States army, and they in turn are under the direction of the company lieutenants. The soldiers serve three years in actual service. They are obliged to study arithmetic, geography, physical geography, correct language and penmanship, civil government, general history, chemistry, physics and military tactics.

There are military academies, corresponding to West Point in this country, at numerous large cities in Germany. Notable among these are those in Berlin, Leipsic, Munich, Heideburg, Jena, Breslau, Koenigsburg, etc. Nautical schools, comparing with Annapolis, are at Hamburg, Koenigsburg, Ludwigshaven, Dantzig and Stettin.

After the soldier serves his three years, he retires to the reserves, or Landwehr, as they are known in that country. For ten years they are subject to call, and once every three years of this period they must report for maneuvers, and these exercises may continue from thirty to sixty days. There is no remonstrance, and all must respond. No one thinks of contesting this rule.

Dr. Farber was asked how it comes that civilized men, so highly educated and enjoying the benefits of a supposed higher life, could be so brutal as has been manifested in thousands of acts by German soldiers in the present carnage in which they are engaged and have gone through. "It is beyond my comprehension."

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