

James Dinkins, N.C. Military Institute, wearing cadet uniform.



Personal
Recollections
and Experiences in the
Confederate Army



WE ARE
READY
TO DEFEND IT

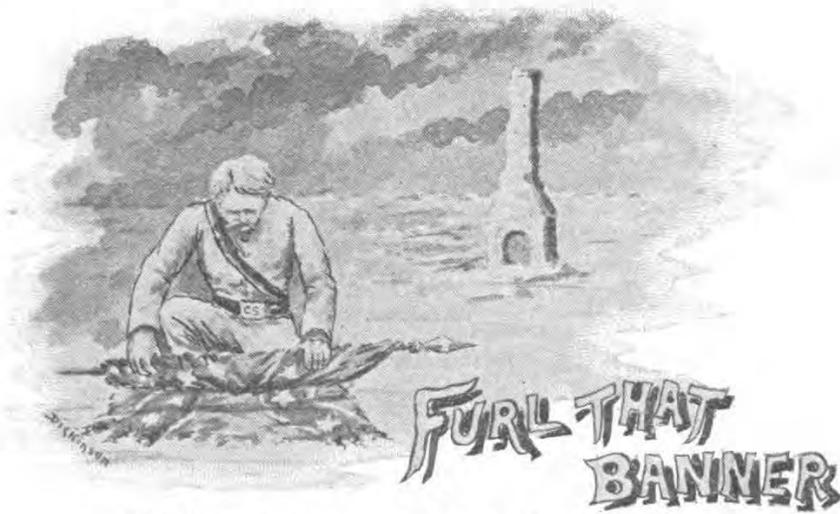
By...
Captain
James...
Dinkins..

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY

1861-1865 By an
Old Johnnie.

Personal Recollections and Experiences in the Confederate Army,
By CAPTAIN JAMES DINKINS.



Furl that banner, furl it slowly ;
Treat it gently - for 'tis holy.

* * * * *
Touch it not - unfurl it never -
Let it droop thus furled. forever

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Illustrated by
L.T. DICKINSON of CHATTANOOGA.

CINCINNATI.
The Robert Clarke Company.
1897.

their support, and within five minutes the entire force was engaged. Salem was, and is yet, only a small country village, but things were lively there that day. A few minutes after the two lines met face to face, Colonel McCulloch, with the Second Missouri and Seventh Tennessee, mounted, sought the enemy's flank. The general had strong hopes of capturing a good part of them, but, before McCulloch could gain the rear, they fell back, mounted their horses, and left us in possession of their dead and wounded. Night came on, and the pursuit was abandoned. A detail was left to bury the dead and care for the wounded of both sides, and we rode rapidly back to Holly Springs. As General Chalmers believed, Pearson was a Yankee spy; he gave General Hurlbut information that Chalmers would attack Corinth. As proof of this, reinforcements were sent to Corinth. We remained a few hours at Holly Springs, then marched to Collierville. Major Mitchell, with two companies of Major Chalmers' battalion, was sent to cut the railroad east of Collierville, and Major Cousins, of the Second Missouri, with two companies, was ordered to do the same on the west side, to prevent any reinforcements from reaching the garrison. We arrived within two miles of the station about daylight. Our advance guard captured the Yankee outpost, and, as soon as the prisoners were turned over, made a dash at the inner guards, who, however, discovered our men in time to escape and give the alarm. We moved forward at a gallop. Colonel McGuirk, with the Third Mississippi, was ordered to go in the rear of the fort, and attack from that point, while the balance of the command would advance from the south. McGuirk reached his place promptly, and found that the two

*START HERE**Maj. Chalmers -
Confederate Officer**Maj. Cousins -
Confederate Officer**Outpost-earthen
fort located near
today's Town
Square**Col. McGuirk -
Confederate Officer*

Illinois regiments, Seventh and Eighth, had gone, leaving a lot of dismounted men in camp. These dismounted men, about one hundred, ran in every direction. It was just after daylight, and the attack was a perfect surprise to them. Some of McGuirk's men began to chase the fugitives on foot, while others dismounted and began to go through the tents. General Chalmers' plan was for McGuirk to charge the rear of the fort simultaneously with his attack in front. We formed line, and moved through the woods to a point about four hundred yards from the fort, and waited for McGuirk. Our skirmish line was hotly engaged; the enemy, using artillery, threw shells high above and beyond us. General Chalmers, growing impatient, sent Lieutenant Banks to order the Third Mississippi to the attack. A moment afterward, a long train of freight cars rolled into the station from Memphis, from which the Thirteenth Regulars disembarked and ran into the fort. We knew, of course, that Major Cousins had failed to cut the road on the west, as ordered, otherwise the train could not have passed him. General Chalmers knew that any further delay would be ruinous, and, therefore, gave the order to charge. Our men moved forward in fine style, but were met by a hot fire. They charged within about sixty yards of the fort. We could see nothing of the enemy except the tops of their heads. General Chalmers saw it would be a great sacrifice to storm the fort, and, therefore, withdrew under cover of the woods, the enemy in the meantime shelling our position sharply.

General Chalmers' plans were well laid, and had McGuirk charged the fort before the arrival of the Thirteenth Regulars, instead of halting in the cavalry camp, the garrison

*Lt. Banks -
Confederate Officer*

*13th Regulars - Union
troops under the
command of Gen.
William T. Sherman*

would, unquestionably, have been captured. Or had Major Cousins cut the road, as ordered, the Thirteenth Regulars could not have reinforced the garrison, and in that event we would have captured it. After the line had fallen back, and was resting in the woods, Lieutenant Bleecker was sent to find Lieutenant Banks and Colonel McGuirk. Arriving at the point where the rear of the train rested, he noticed a number of our men in the cars throwing out saddles, bridles, blankets, and bundles. Bleecker dismounted, hitched his horse to a telegraph pole, and boarded the coach at the end of the train. He wanted some of the plunder. The coach was empty, but on the seat was a handsome sword, which he picked up. He ran out to where the men were busy getting saddles. In one of the cars were several horses. It had not occurred to the men that the horses could be gotten out. Bleecker said, "Make them jump out," and with that he pulled himself into the car, untied a fine horse, and led him to the door. After much urging the horse jumped out. It did not require much time for the boys to get the others out. With their plunder, they all galloped off to catch the command, which had retired about a mile back, where the general waited in vain for the Federals to follow. Through the baggage taken from the cars, we discovered that General Sherman and staff were passengers on the train. We captured all their personal baggage. The sword which Bleecker found had the name of "Lieut.-Col. Ewing, Gen. Sherman's Staff," on the cover. It was a very handsome one. The horse which Bleecker captured was also a fine animal, and most likely was the one ridden by General Sherman. Bleecker was very proud of his horse, but his pride

*Lt. Bleecker -
Confederate officer*

*General Sherman -
Union Army General*

of ownership was short lived, for the general ordered the quartermaster to take charge of him, as well as the others captured.

As soon as we ascertained that General Sherman was in the fort, the failure was doubly regretted. Burton, one of Lieutenant Bleecker's negroes, named the captured horse, "Sherman," and often said his "marster captured Old Sherman."

Think of the circumstances which make or destroy the reputation or success of a man! Had McGuirk moved on and captured the fort, instead of allowing his men to halt in camp, or had Major Cousins cut the road, as ordered, Sherman would almost certainly have been captured, and the story of the burning of churches, convents, and school-houses, and the destruction of every thing to eat along his line of march in Georgia, without a foe in his front, would never have been told, and future generation, would not have read how helpless women, often sick and destitute, appealed to him to spare their houses and a few rations of meal, and how contemptuously they were pushed aside. The houses were burned as well as all their provisions. Had we captured Sherman, he never would have had the opportunity to make himself famous, and in all probability he would have been in prison during the balance of the war.

We fell back, going south, and crossed the Coldwater at Ingraham's Mill.