THE BATTLE or NASHVILLE

The Limit of the Last Aggressive
Movement of the Armies of the Confederacy, Hood's Grand Maneuver Designed
to Prevent Sherman's March to the Sea.
Fought in the Southern Suburbs of
Nashville, December 15-16, 1864.



Written by W. E. BEARD, for the Nashville Industrial Bureau

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8129. "M. D. C.," Nashville:
"Will you please give me or tell me
where I can obtain a short sketch of the
life of Sam Davis and the facts of his
death. If it does not take too much space
I would like a copy of the poem about him,
by a Southern author, I think, that is very
frequently recited?"

The story is told in full in a small book called "On the Field of Honor," by Anna Robinson Watson, which also relates a number of other heroic incidents of the civil war.

Several poems have been written about Sam Davis. One by Ella Wheeler Wilcox is thought to be the best. The poem you inquire about is probably the following by John Trotwood Moore:

"Tell me his name and you are free,"
The General said, while from the tree
The grim rope angled threat'ningly.

The birds ceased singing—happy birds, That sang of home and mother-words. The sunshine kissed his cheek—dear sun, It loves a life that's just begun! The very breezes held their breath To watch the fight 'twixt life and death. And O, how calm and sweet and free Smiled back the hills of Tennessee! Smiled back the hills, as if to say, "O, save your life for us to-day!"

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"Tell me his rame and you are free,"
The General 5. id, "and I shall see
You safe within the rebel line—
I'd love to save such life as thine."

A tear gleamed down the ranks of blue— (The bayonets were tipped with dew.) Across the rugged cheek of war God's angels rolled a teary star. The boy looked up—'twas this they heard; "And would you have me break my word?"

A tear stood in the General's eye;
"My boy, I hate to see thee die—
Give me the traitor's name—and fly!"

Young Davis smiled, as calm and free As He who walked on Galilee; "Had I a thousand lives to live, Had I a thousand lives to give, I'd lose them—nay, I'd gladly die Before I'd live one life, a lie!" He turned—for not a soldier stirred—"Your duty, men—I gave my word."

The hills smiled back a farewell smile, The breeze sobbed o'er his hair awhile, The birds broke out in sad refrain, The sunbeams kissed his cheek again— Then, gathering up their blazing bars, They shook his name among the stars,

O, stars, that now his brothers are,
O, sun, his sire in truth and light,
Go, tell the list'ning worlds afar
Of him who died for truth and right!
For martyr of all martyrs he
Who dies to saye an enemy!

THE BATTLE OF NASHVILLE

December 15-16, 1864



HE southern suburbs of Nashville mark the limit of Gen. John B. Hood's invasion of Tennessee, a grand strategic movement primarily

intended to draw Gen. W. T. Sherman from Atlanta, lately captured, and forestall further offensive Federal operations in Georgia. Hood's army, known as the Army of Tennessee, mustered just half the strength of Sherman's. The country beyond Atlanta being flat, offered no premising fighting ground for Hood in resisting the Federal army; that to the north did. The movement began Sept. 29, 1864. In less than ninety days the last of Hood's rear-guard had succeeded in getting back across the Tennessee River, and the pursuit of it had ended. In that time Hood had moved his army around Atlanta to the west, striking Sherman's line of communication with Nashville-his base of supplies; had played hide-andseek with his Federal opponent; then turning to Florence, Alabama, crossing the river and entering Tennessee, had fought two pitched battles, and the Confederate army had lost not less than 15,000 men. Sherman, having sent Gen. George H. Thomas, commander of the Army of the Cumberland, back to Nashville to take care of Hood, had meanwhile gone forward with his original plan, "The March to the Sea."

Thomas and Hood had been officers in the same regiment before the Civil War, the Second Cavalry. Both were Southern born, both West Pointers. At Stone's River, Thomas had fought with conspicuous success; later, at Snodgrass Hill, he had won the name, "The Rock of Chickamauga." Hood, at Gettysburg, had lost the use of an arm, and had left a leg at Chickamauga, but had won his promotion there to the rank of Lieutenant General.

In Hood's army were over forty regimental organizations of Tennesseans excitedly happy at the thought of seeing their native state again. The invasion began with the whole army responsive to the prospect of an aggressive movement, destined, though it was, to be the last aggressive movement of the armies of the Confederacy.

To hold the Confederates in check until he could muster all his forces at Nashville, Gen. Thomas had thrown an army, consisting of two divisions of the Twenty-third Army Corps, the Fourth Corps, and seventy-five hundred cavalry, in the field under Gen. John M. Schofield, a classmate of Hood's at West Point, and later commander of the United States Army by appointment of Cleveland. The first clash came at Columbia, followed by a brilliantly planned flank movement to destroy Schofield's retreating column at Spring Hill, which failed. The real encounter occurred at Franklin, eighteen miles south of Nashville, on Nov. 30, 1864, when one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War was fought.

At 1 P. M. the next day, after burying their many dead, including six generals, and caring for their

wounded, including five more generals,* the Confederates took up the march on Nashville, defended now by some 80,000 fighting men, more than three corps of whom were veteran soldiers. Gen. Hood had 30,000 men, some of whom, under Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, were sent to Murfreesboro to hold in check a force of 8,000 Federals. Hood's force was not sufficient to justify an attack on Nashville, nor strong enough, by any means, to chance the issue in the open field, but with the Army of Tennessee strongly entrenched, he believed he might sustain an attack from Thomas, possibly defeat him and gain possession of Nashville, with its vast military supplies. He hoped, too, for reinforcements. The first week of the Confederate invasion of Nashville's suburbs the weather was mild. On Dec. 7, there came a sudden change. It continued cold. By noon of the 9th, it was sleeting. The next four days Nashville was gripped with ice.

Thomas had delayed his attack, awaiting more cavalry; then had come the terrible weather, terrible indeed for the Confederates, many of whom were without shoes, and all on scant rations. The weather finally changed on the afternoon of the 13th, and after a day of rain the battle broke at dawn on the 15th.

The Federal outer line extended from the river on the west, crossing the Harding road at Sulgrave Court, the Hillsboro road at Marker No. 2, Belmont Heights at Marker No. 1, thence bending back northeast to Fort Casino (Reservoir Hill), Fort Negley, and rested on the river again at the present site of the City Hospital.

^{*}Confederate loss, 1,750 killed, 3,800 wounded, 702 missing; Federal, 189 killed, 1,033 wounded, 1,104 missing.

The Confederates' entrenched line, on the right, began at a redoubt in the rear of the present James S. Robinson home, the line crossing the Nolensville turnpike at Marker No. 15, the Franklin turnpike at Marker No. 9, the Granny White turnpike at Marker No. 7, the line running to a high point on the O. F. Noel farm, Marker No. 3, two hundred yards east of the Hillsboro turnpike. Marker No. 3 was the salient angle in the Confederate works, the site of Redoubt No. 1. From this point the line bent almost due south, crossing the Hillsboro turnpike and ending at Redoubt No. 3, on the present G. A. Puryear place, a half-mile distant from Marker No. 3. The Confederate right was held by the corps of Gen. B. Frank Cheatham, a Nashville soldier; Stephen D. Lee's corps was in the center, and Gen. A. P. Stewart's corps held the left, covering the Hillsboro turnpike.

Thomas' plan of battle was: The forts and advance batteries to open on the Confederates all along the line; Gen. James B. Steedman commanding the left, to make a heavy demonstration on the Confederate right, while the Federal right, made up of the Fourth Corps, Gen. Thomas J. Wood, the Sixteenth Corps, Gen. Andrew Jackson Smith, and Gen. Edward Hatch's cavalry, swung against Gen. A. P. Stewart. Supporting Hatch's cavalry was Knipe's division of cavalry and, later on, back of the infantry line, were thrown Schofield's two divisions of the Twenty-third Corps, the force exceeding the strength of Hood's whole army.

Board a Belmont Heights car some day, alighting at Linden avenue, and climb the hill on the right to Marker No. 1. From this point Thomas swung his massive flank movement relentlessly against the Confederate left.

The battle, however, began on the other wing, with Steedman's troops charging Cheatham's. Among the Federal officers in that charge were H. C. Corbin, later Commander of the United States Army; General (then Colonel) W. R. Shafter, Spanish-American War commander, and Lieut. Col. C. H. Grosvenor, the Ohio statesman. The Federal attack was easily beaten off. The front of the Confederate works resembled a slaughter-house, and the defeat of the Steedman demonstration ended the heavy fighting there, the interest in the first day's battle from then on centering elsewhere — the Federal right.

Aggressions there began against a Confederate advance line entrenched on Montgomery's Hill, Marker No. 5, half a mile in front of Marker No. 1. Just after noon Gen. Wood ordered Sam Beatty's division to take the work, the way being paved by a heavy cannonade from the Federal salient. As the Federal guns subsided, Post's brigade, largely Ohians, rushed Montgomery's Hill and captured it. The first serious obstruction encountered by Smith's corps was Redoubt No. 4, a mile southwest of Redoubt No. 3. The batteries of Hatch's cavalry and McArthur's infantry were concentrated upon it simultaneously, and the hill taken, the powerful Federal line sweeping on to the main attack over every obstruction, though in the struggle for one redoubt, a Federal brigade commander was lost.

Gen. Stewart, a trained soldier, but a college professor in times of peace, was the Confederate corps commander on whose thin line this storm was preparing to break. On his right was the division of Gen. W. W. Loring, a one-armed veteran of the Mexican War, later a Pasha in the service of the Khedive of Egypt. At the salient angle—Marker No. 3—was C. W. Sears' Mississippi brigade of French's division, while guarding the Hillsboro road was the division of Edward Cary Walthall, later a Mississippi Senator, the youngest Major General in Hood's army. When the demonstrations began, Walthall extended his line to the south, to occupy a stone fence on the east side of the Hillsboro turnpike.

On the Federal side, the redoubts having been taken, Smith swept down upon this stone wall, while Schofield, in his rear, rushed Couch's division around Smith's right, for the hills overlooking the Granny White pike. The battle raged furiously along the entire Confederate left. Hood hurried reinforcements from the center (Stephen D. Lee's corps); first Manigault's and Dea's brigades came, and finally Ed Johnson's whole division. They were placed on the left of Walthall's position, confronting Smith, for elsewhere in the Federal attack the Fourth Corps had been forced to hug the slope of the hills while Confederate bullets played over them. But the Confederate reinforcements gave way, reformed on a battery, and finally broke hopelessly. The entire left was crumpled up. Sears, at the Confederate salient, lost a leg and was later captured. Only Ector's old brigade, mostly Texans, commanded by D. Coleman, held out; on what is now known as Shy's Hill, on the Granny White Road, it defied capture and destruction, till the Confederate left, in the falling night, found new fighting grounds east of the Granny White turnpike.

Hood reformed his lines and transferred Cheatham to the Confederate left. Lee's corps now guarded the Franklin turnpike—a means of retreat. Stewart's corps was in the center. The night was spent in entrenching. The Confederate right rested on Overton Hill, to the north of "Traveler's Rest," the old Overton home, where Hood had made headquarters while preparing for battle. The line ran west through the Van Leer Kirkman farm, the Overton Lea place (Senator Luke Lea's father) to Shy's Hill, the crest of which was the salient angle on the Confederate left. The entrenchments thence extended southerly, along the hill-tops, fairly parallel with the Granny White road.

The second day's battle opened late, with a two hours' terrific cannon fire. Near noon the Federal skirmishers went forward to feel out the Confederate works. The plan was to strike at the most vulnerable point.* A Federal column to assault Overton Hill was formed by Gen. Wood, made up of Post's and Streight's brigades of Beatty's division, and Col. C. R. Thompson's brigade of negro troops from Steedman's division, with Grosvenor's brigade supporting. The assaults were made up a slope, swept by musketry and grape shot. Once the Federals approached within thirty yards of the works, only to be slaughtered again. Col. Philip Sidney Post, a hero of the first day's fight, fell here while rallying his men, it was supposed mortally wounded, but he lived to be breveted for gallantry. Dead men in blue lay five-deep in places. A third of the Federal losses in the battle were suffered here.

^{*}The Federals, except Steedman, were formed in heavy double lines.

Matters were not going so well with the Confederate left: Gen. J. H. Wilson's cavalry (Hatch's and Knipe's divisions dismounted), in the afternoon, supplemented by Gen. I. N. Stiles' brigade of infantry, was steadily swinging around to the Confederate rear. Chalmers' handful of cavalry fought from slope to slope, but the Federals pushed on to the pass through the knobs traversed by the Granny White pike. Coleman's and Reynolds' Confederate brigades were sent there. They could only stay the advance. On their right, the remnants of Govan's Arkansas brigade of Cleburne's old division finally gave way, after Govan and his ranking colonel were wounded. Maney's brigade of Tennesseans, commanded by Col. Hume R. Field of the First Tennessee, retook the position and held it, aided by Gist's old brigade, led by Col. John H. Anderson.

The disaster, impending for two days, came about 4 o'clock—of a dreary, rainy afternoon—on Shy's Hill, held by the extended division of Gen. William B. Bate, late a Tennessee Senator. The hill was subjected to a smashing cross-fire from the Federal batteries of McArthur's and Couch's divisions, the latter only three hundred yards away. McMillan's brigade of McArthur's division—Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota and Ohio regiments—formed in a hollow to assault the hill. The cannon roared a space with redoubled fury, and the column started.

Col. William Shy, whose name the hill has since borne, commanding the Twentieth Tennessee, died fighting on it to the last. Thomas Benton Smith, "The Boy General," one of Bate's brigadiers, was captured, and later, it is charged, slashed over the head, his mind being permanently impaired. H. R. Jackson, another brigadier, was captured. East of the hill, the Confederate lines held long enough to inflict a loss that was felt; and on the extreme left, Hume R. Field for the moment checked the enemy in his front, but with the carrying of Shy's Hill the fight was lost; the Federals charged forward at all points. Stewart's position was flanked, and, in turn, Lee's corps gave way, the majority of the Confederate Army breaking for the Franklin turnpike. Gen. E. W. Rucker of Forrest's cavalry was wounded and captured, fighting back among the hills. Ed Johnson, one of Lee's division commanders, was captured when Lee's corps was flanked. But the men of that corps saved the army from threatened destruction, forming a ready rearguard.

At Columbia, Forrest joined the retreating army and took charge of the rear-guard, with Walthall commanding the infantry. For days the weather was terrible; the whole week was one of inexpressible hardship and danger. But the rear-guard was steadfast. A provisional brigade, commanded by a future President, Benjamin Harrison, was among the Federal troops testing the metal of that rear-guard, the encounter costing the brigade a cannon.

The Tennessee River, the boundary of pursuit, was crossed successfully, though almost miraculously, the last troops getting over on Dec. 27.

The Federals lost at Nashville 3,057 men. The Confederate loss was 4,462 killed, wounded and missing. The Army of Tennessee also left fifty-four cannon behind it.

THE MARKERS

HE markers locating various points of interest in connection with the battle of Nashville, or the position of troops engaged, were erected by the Nashville Industrial Bureau and the Nashville Battlefield Association, working in co-operation. The markers from 1 to 20 were erected in 1912, and for the most part fix the location of troops in the first day's battle. A few of the numbers mark the sites of historic points in the massive works about the city.

MARKER No. 1

The location of a Federal salient and main battery in the outer defenses on Dec. 15, 1864. The marker is located on the crest of a hill, between the Belmont boulevard and the Hillsboro turnpike. This salient was the pivot on which the Federal right was swung against the troops of Gen. A. P. Stewart holding the Hillsboro road. Reached by the Belmont Heights car line and a walk up the hill by way of Linden avenue.

MARKER No. 2

The Federal works of the outer defenses crossed the Hillsboro turnpike at this point. Remains of the works may still be seen on the west side of the road. The marker is located just south of the limits of St. Bernard Academy. This part of the Federal line was held by the Fourth Corps, then commanded by Gen.

Thomas J. Wood, a Kentuckian, who was made a Major General for distinguished services at Nashville. The marker is at the terminus (1913) of the Broadway-Hillsboro car line.

MARKER No. 3

Marker No. 3 fixes the location of Redoubt No. 1, the salient angle of the Confederate left. It is located on Noel's Hill, about 200 yards east of the Hillsboro turnpike. It is accessible by way of the Broadway and Hillsboro car line and a walk from the terminus, or by tramping over the fields from Marker No. 5.

MARKER No. 4

The location of a battery in the Confederate line defended by the troops of Gen. Loring. This marker is located on the private property of O. F. Noel, in front of a residence facing an old boulevard of other days, an extension of the present Belmont boulevard. Accessible by walking from the terminus of the Belmont Heights car line.

MARKER No. 5

The site of the old Montgomery house, the ruins of which were a landmark on the Confederate advance line when the battle began. According to newspaper accounts of the battle, the Montgomery house was burned about 1862. The Confederate advance was heavily attacked here by Beatty's division of the Fourth Army Corps about 1 P. M. Dec. 15, and the hill taken. The marker stands in front of the Smith Criddle residence, and is reached by the Belmont car line and a walk west on Cedar Lane.

MARKER No. 6

This was the location of the Confederate advance line on Granny White turnpike prior to the battle. The marker is at the mouth of a lane leading east from the terminus of Belmont boulevard. Accessible by walk from the Belmont Heights car line or the Glendale Park car line. A short distance beyond this marker the Tennessee Central belt line crosses the Granny White turnpike.

MARKER No. 7

The Confederate works crossed the Granny White turnpike at this point, and vestiges of them, running at a sharp angle with the road, are still visible. Marker No. 7 is located a few paces south of the E. T. Noel home. Reached by the Glendale Park car line and a walk west from Clifton station, through Clifton avenue to the Granny White turnpike.

MARKER No. 8

A redoubt in Gen. Stephen D. Lee's line, standing in a meadow just north of the James E. Caldwell residence. The mounds of earth, west of the Franklin turnpike, are easily visible from that highway. The marker is reached by the Nashville Interurban car line.

MARKER No. 9

The point where the Confederate line (Lee's) crossed the Franklin turnpike on Dec. 15. Marker No. 8 is visible from No. 9, directly to the southwest. Reached by the Nashville Interurban car line.

MARKER No. 10

Fort Negley, the main point in the fortifications of Nashville, thrown up in the fall of 1862, under the direction of Maj. Gen. James S. Negley of Pennsylvania, with the aid of his Chief Engineer—later Brigadier General—James St. Clair Morton. During the Civil War, Fort Negley was a large, complex work, having within it two casemates, protected with railroad iron, and bomb-proof. The guns at Fort Negley and its neighbor, Fort Casino, opened the battle of Nashville at daybreak Dec. 15, 1864. Reached by the Glendale car line and a walk east on Bass street to the Boulevard.

Marker No. 11

Fort Casino, the present (1913) site of the City Reservoir. This fort was erected at the same time as Fort Negley, and the marker stands on the west side of the Glendale car line, at the reservoir grounds gate. The City Reservoir, costing \$354,525.21, was completed August 24, 1889, its capacity being 50,000,000 gallons. On the night of Nov. 4, 1912, the wall of the east basin gave way at midnight, releasing 25,000,000 gallons of water, which rushed like a mountain torrent down the hillside, doing \$45,000 damage to property. Not a life was lost, however.

MARKER No. 12

Fort Morton, located on a hill northwest of Fort Casino, and named in honor of James St. Clair Morton, a native of Philadelphia, a West Pointer. In 1860 Morton was selected to explore the Chiriqui country in Central America, and test the practicability of a rail-

road route across the isthmus. In building the defenses of Nashville, Morton swooped down upon barber shops, kitchens and even churches, according to a history of the Army of the Cumberland, gathering in negro laborers to shovel the earth. The works he built made Nashville during the war one of the most strongly fortified cities in the country. Morton also built the defenses of Murfreesboro. The marker is at the head of Central avenue, two blocks west from Fall School, near the Glendale car line.

MARKER No. 13

The site of Fort Houston, the marker being located on the lawn bordering the residence of Maj. E. C. Lewis, 119 Sixteenth avenue, South. To make way for this fort, the handsome home of Russell Houston, a strong Unionist, had to be destroyed—hence its name. The marker is reached by Belmont cars, the stop being Division street and Sixteenth avenue.

Marker No. 14

The site of a lunette, or small open work, occupied by the remnants of Granbery's Confederate brigade, 300 strong, when Steedman made his attack on the Confederate right, Dec. 15. Located in the rear of the present James S. Robinson home. It is reached by the Nolensville car line and a walk east on the lane from Woody Crest station.

MARKER No. 15

The point where Cheatham's line, the Confederate right on the first day of the battle, crossed the Nolensville turnpike. Reached by the Nolensville car line, the stop being about 100 yards south of Melrose avenue, the street leading to the crest of Rains' Hill (Marker No. 18).

Marker No. 16

An angle in Cheatham's line on the first day of the battle. It stands on what is now Peachtree street, a short distance east of the Nolensville car line, and very near Marker No. 15.

Marker No. 17

One block away from No. 16, and almost due north, Cheatham's line is further marked by No. 17 (located on Valeria street). Remains of the Confederate works, much sunken, can be easily seen. Reached by the Nolensville car line.

Marker No. 18

Rains' Hill, a commanding eminence in the Confederate line on Dec. 15. It overlooks the Nolensville turnpike, a couple of hundred yards west of the road, and three and a half miles from the city. Reached by the Nolensville car line and a walk west on Melrose avenue and thence on Cline avenue.

Marker No. 19

A famous place in the suburbs of Nashville is Melrose, the old home of Aaron V. Brown, Governor of Tennessee, 1845 to 1847, and Postmaster General in Buchanan's Cabinet. On the morning of Dec. 15, the Confederate works ran about 200 yards south of the historic residence. Melrose continues to be one of the show places about Nashville, and is now the property of W. S. Bransford.. It is reached by the Nashville Interurban car line, the stop being at the Tennessee Cen-

tral crossing, and a walk east through what is known as Berry's Lane. The marker is located within the Melrose grounds.

MARKER No. 20

Fort Gillem, a Federal work in the interior defenses in 1864, named for Gen. Alvin C. Gillem. Gen. Gillem was a native of Jackson County, Tennessee, and a West Pointer. For a period in 1863 he was Provost Marshal of Nashville, and from June, 1863 to August, 1864, was charged with guarding the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad, now a division of the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway, leading to Memphis. Gen. Gillem's son and namesake entered the Spanish-American War as a Captain in the First Tennessee Regiment, U. S. V., which saw service in the Philippines, where he rose to the rank of Major. Later he entered the United States Army. He is now (1913) Captain of Troop H, Eleventh U. S. Cavalry. Jubilee Hall of Fisk University, one of the country's notable negro schools, now occupies the site of Fort Gillem. The Hall was built from the proceeds of tours made by the Jubilee Singers of the University over the world, singing old plantation melodies. They were heard and remembered by many of the crowned heads of Europe. Reached by the Jefferson street car line, the marker being adjacent to the handsome hall.

SAM DAVIS

(Ella Wheeler Wilcox, in the Confederate Veteran.)

When the Lord colls up earth's heroes
To stand before His face,
Oh, many a name unknown to fame
Shall ring from that high place!
And out of a grave in the Southland,
At the just God's call and beck,
Shall one man rise with fearless eyes
And a rope about his neck.

For men have swung from gallows
Whose souls were white as snow.
Not how they die, nor where, but why,
Is what God's records show,
And on that mighty ledger
Is writ Sam Davis' name—
For honor's sake he would not make
A compromise with shame.

The great world lay before him,
For he was in his youth;
With love of life young hearts are rife,
But better he loved truth.
He fought for his convictions,
And when he stood at bay,
He would not flinch nor stir one inch
From honor's narrow way.

They offered life and freedom
If he would speak the word;
In silent pride he gazed aside
As one who had not heard.
They argued, pleaded, threatened—
It was but wasted breath.
"Let come what must, I keep my trust,"
He said, and laughed at death.

He would not sell his manhood
To purchase priceless hope;
Where kings drag down a name and crown
He dignified a rope.
Ah, grave, where was your triumph?
Ah, death, where was your sting?
He showed you how a man could bow
To doom and stay a king.

And God, who loves the loyal
Because they are like Him,
I doubt not yet that soul shall set
Among His cherubim.
O Southland! bring your laurels;
And add your wreath, O North!
Let glory claim the hero's name,
And tell the world his worth.