



James H. Wood
photograph taken 1910

“STONEWALL” JACKSON

His Campaigns and Battles

And “The Regiment” As I Saw Them

by

James H. Wood

Captain, Co. “D”

37th Va. Infantry Regiment

With an Appendix

by James Power Smith

Aide-de-camp of Lt.-Gen. T.J. Jackson

THE CONFEDERATE
REPRINT COMPANY



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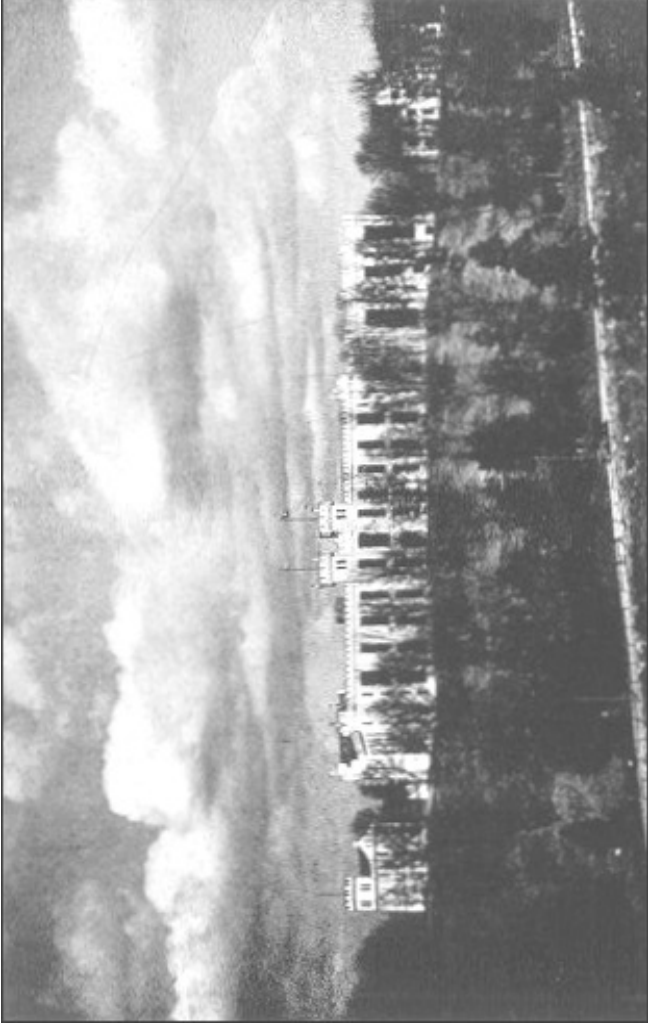
Originally Published in 1910
by The Eddy Press Corporation
Cumberland, Maryland

Reprint Edition © 2016
The Confederate Reprint Company
Post Office Box 2027
Toccoa, Georgia 30577
www.confederatereprint.com

Cover and Interior Design by
Magnolia Graphic Design
www.magnoliagraphicdesign.com

ISBN-13: 978-0970852595
ISBN-10: 0970852592

Affectionately dedicated to my two sons and two daughters, J. Harvey Wood, Jr., William Scott Wood, Gertrude Wood Dillard and Mary Wood Harris – the only living members of my family.



The Virginia Military Institute

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PREFACE



These brief memoirs of the War between the States have been written with care. More elaborate detail might have been employed but habits of a professional life have led to terseness of expression. Hence the story unembellished is given, based on personal recollections aided by facts from others and such records as I have been able to reach, including *Strickler's Statistics* of dates of battles.

No effort has been made to do more than to give a brief account of the events seen and known directly or from sources above mentioned. This was undertaken for the purpose of leaving to comrades who still live, to the families of those who are dead, to our own families and to posterity some record, from our view-point, of the most stirring events and enactments of our lives.

To the extent of my rank I was a participant in the scenes described – except two battles – from which disability from wounds prevented. “The Regiment” creditably participated in all.

The performance of this work, though unavoidably deferred, is a duty I have long since felt incumbent upon myself as well as others who can and care to do so, to give to our country the benefit of our testimony as we saw it, of the achievements, sufferings and sacrifices through which our comrades and country passed in those eventful years before the same shall fade from our memory. Our ranks are rapidly thinning and soon there will be none left to tell the tale; hence the importance of the testimony of actors who yet live. From their direct testimony truth can be reached by the future historian. It is becoming in us and we do revere the memory of our dead comrades, thousands of whom sleep in unknown graves, and their achievements and devotion to the cause they believed to be just have almost been forgotten. Yet while the questions involved in the War were forever settled and so accepted in good faith by the people of the South, it is the duty of the survivors to preserve from oblivion the names and deeds of their dead comrades. To this end this narrative, for whatever it is worth, has been written.

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps mil-
lions, think;
'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man
uses,
Instead of speech may form a lasting link
Of ages; to what straits old Time reduces
Frail man, when paper – even a rag like this,

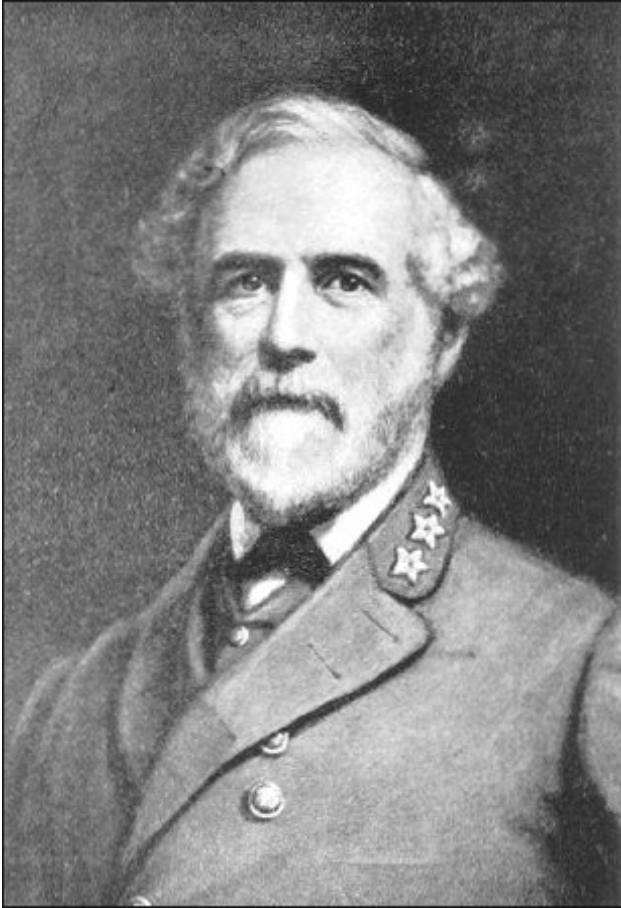
Survives himself, his tomb, and all that's
his.

– Lord Byron.

I have not mentioned many interesting events, including skirmishes and picket fights – many of which developed into small battles. Nor have I mentioned the hard marches through snow, ice, water, mud and rain, many almost shoeless, poorly clad, hungry, shivering with cold, worn, exhausted, sleeping upon the cold and wet ground, ill and suffering – because memory dimmed by years would not permit the attempt. As it is I cannot hope to have avoided mistakes. After the lapse of so much time it would hardly be possible that some misconception or misunderstanding of an event or events should not occur. In such case I would be glad if apprised of it, to make such corrections as I may be able.

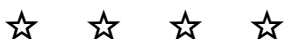
I regret not being able to procure photographs of the others of the Field and Staff Officers and of not being able to procure a roster of the Junior Officers and men of the regiment for insertion in these pages, but as it is I send this volume forth for such consideration as it may receive.

James H. Wood.
Of Bristol, Virginia.
New York, May 2, 1910.



Gen. Robert E. Lee

CHAPTER ONE



Virginia Military Institute. The Flag Raising. Growing War Spirit.

The growing discontent and excitement in 1860 and the early part of 1861 will ever be remembered by those who passed through that period. At and before this time I, then in my teens, was a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute located at Lexington, Virginia.

For some years prior to this, the questions of political difference between the sections of the United States designated as North and South had been discussed in Congress and on the hustings with increasing acrimony and divergence. The two great political parties, Democrat and Whig, had long been contestants for political supremacy, but in 1860 the Republican party, theretofore greatly inferior in numbers and strength to either of the others, elected Abraham Lincoln sixteenth President of the United States. This was attributed to a division in the Demo-

cratic party and the nomination of candidates by each of its two factions. This triumph of the Republican party increased anxiety and apprehension in the people of the South as to their institutions and rights.

Then followed the assembling of the National Congress on the first Monday in December; the secession of South Carolina, December 20th 1860; of Alabama, January 11th, 1861; of Georgia, January 19th; Louisiana, January 26th; Texas, February 1st; the evacuation of Fort Sumter by the Federals, April 14th; the call by Lincoln for troops to coerce the seceded States, April 15th, the secession of Virginia, April 17th; of Arkansas, May 6th; of North Carolina, May 20th; of Tennessee, June 24th; and by acts of the Provisional Congress Missouri was admitted as a member of the Confederate States of America, August 20th; and Kentucky on December 10th, – and of these States the new nation was organized.

Leaders in the field and not on the forum were now being considered and looked to. Sons of the South who had been trained at West Point and a long list of trained soldiers from the Virginia Military Institute, as well as its professors, educated and trained in the science of war, were justly of first consideration. Many of these and many laymen, as well as many members of the then corps of cadets, won enviable distinction in the four ensuing years. The V.M.I., the West Point of the South, now disclosed its inestimable worth to the new nation born at Montgomery, February 18th, 1861. It may be of in-

terest to relate here an incident which disclosed in advance a military chieftain of whom but little was known until the opportunity came for him to discover his merit. Men before this period who had filled mediocre places, began to burst forth in new light as opportunity came. An incident of one, then a quiet V.M.I. professor, now known to history and the world, is worth preserving. It occurred in March, 1861, at Lexington.

The secession of Virginia had not then occurred, but the step was being hotly contested on the hustings between opposing parties. The corps of cadets was almost unanimous for, and the county of Rockbridge and the town of Lexington at the time overwhelmingly against, secession.

Lexington was the home of honest John Letcher, then Governor of the State, whose potent influence was understood to have thus molded public sentiment. The secessionists were enthusiastic and intolerant; the unionists sedate and determined. The war spirit had grown rapidly and had spread to all classes. Members of the corps were almost daily hoisting on barracks secession flags which were promptly taken down by order of the Institute authorities, such evidences of sentiment thus displayed on a State Institution not being permissible while the State was yet a member of the Union. At this time a fine volunteer company composed of young men of Lexington and vicinity, with Capt. Sam Letcher, brother of the Governor, at its head, was being regularly drilled on Saturdays of each week.

The war spirit had now grown so intense that but a spark was needed to set its smouldering fires into a consuming flame. To emphasize their sentiments, the opposing parties without concert or understanding, conceived the plan of raising flags; one the Stars and Bars, the other the Stars and Stripes. The following Saturday was chosen as the day. Due advertisement had been given by both parties. This brought large numbers of people to town, most of whom came provided with such arms as the husbandman of that day had. The number of unionists was more than four times greater than the number of secessionists. The latter soon ran up their flag in the court house yard, addresses followed and the small crowd, including the corps of cadets, was about to disperse to their homes, and the corps to barracks, when the unionists began raising their flag pole some distance up and in the middle of Main Street. From some defect the pole broke and fell, at which the corps vociferously gave vent to expressions of joy, and later returned to barracks more than half a mile away, leaving, however, some three or four of its number behind.

On reaching barracks dinner roll call and the march to and from dinner followed. As ranks were broken on our return from dinner, one of our number who had remained uptown came in breathless haste and announced that House Mountain men had fallen on some of the cadets uptown and killed them. House Mountain is situate some ten or a dozen miles from Lexington, and at and in the vicinity of its base

were homes of a good class of people. They were understood at that time to be extremely pro-Union. This information thus given was the needed match to set in flame the pent-up feeling for war. Without a word every member of the corps rushed to his room, seized his musket, cartridge box, bayonet and scabbard and accoutered himself as he ran down the stoops to the front of barracks, thence down the near way to the foot of Main Street near the Letcher residence. Colonel (afterwards General) Smith, superintendent and ranking officer of the Institute, intercepted and tried to turn us back, but his efforts were in vain. On we sped until we reached Main Street. Here Cadet Captain Galloway called out, "Form battalion." This we proceeded to do. All had loaded their muskets and fixed bayonets as they proceeded hither.

While battalion was forming, Major John McCausland (then a sub-professor and afterwards a brilliant Confederate brigadier-general) appeared in front of the battalion and said, "Young men, form and I will lead you up." Col. Smith had now arrived and began to urge our return to barracks. R. McCulloch, of the corps, called to McCausland to lead us on. He replied that his superior officer (Colonel Smith) was in command. Meanwhile the unionists who had realized the situation were but a short distance up the street, preparing for the shock of battle which seemed so imminent. The entreaties to return to barracks and the formation into battalion went on. There stood one hundred and eighty manly

youths, armed and equipped and eager for the fray, awaiting the command forward. They were of the very flower of the South. A little later on many of them won marked distinction, boys as they were in armies the soldiers of which for gallantry and endurance have never been excelled in the history of the world.

At this time, Mr. Massey who had won our confidence in his remarks at the flag raising earlier in the day and Maj. R.E. Colston, a professor in the V.M.I. and afterwards a gallant Confederate brigadier-general, galloped up and joined in the appeal for our return to barracks. Meanwhile a greater than any arrived, tall, sinewy, well-formed, a slight stoop in the shoulders, large feet and hands, retreating forehead, blue-grey eyes, straight nose, strong mouth and chin held well to the front, in measured gait, Major Thomas Jonathan Jackson walked up and down before the battalion which he viewed closely, then looked at the surroundings and position of the opposing forces. He uttered no word, but his movements grew more animated each moment, his stature straightened and grew taller and bigger, and his merit was apparent to all and made him the central figure.

Still the formation of battalion went on. A leader who would take command was only needed, while but two or three hundred yards up the street the volunteer company of a hundred young men, well-officered, armed and equipped, were drawn up across the street in battle array, supported by five times their

number of the citizens of the town and county, armed with shotguns, rifles and pistols. This warlike scene which had been gathering like a storm cloud during the morning had alarmed the peace-loving citizens and hence an impromptu delegation came forth to intercede for peace and prevent a bloody tragedy which seemed about to occur. These intercessions prevailed, and the corps broke ranks and returned to barracks, discharging their loaded guns as they went.

As soon as we reached barracks, we were summoned by the familiar drum beat to Colonel Smith's section room where we found Colonels Smith and Preston and Mr. Massey on, and Major Jackson near to, but off the rostrum. Colonel Smith proceeded at once to excoriate the corps for its insubordinate conduct. Preston, then Massey, responded pacifically to our call. Last but not least, Major Jackson was called. I remember the scene as if enacted but yesterday. True soldier as he was, Jackson hesitated until Colonel Smith, his superior in rank, asked him to speak. At once he mounted the rostrum and faced his audience. His erect figure, flashing eye, energetic expression, short, quick and to the point, disclosed to the commonest mind a leader of merit. He said, "Military men make short speeches, and as for myself I am no hand at speaking anyhow. The time for war has not yet come, but it will come and that soon, and when it does come my advice is to draw the sword and throw away the scabbard." The personality of the speaker, the force

of these simple words thus uttered, elicited a response of approval I never heard surpassed, except by the Confederate yell often heard on the battlefield a little later on. This simple speech and manner of Jackson established in the minds of his audience the belief that he was a leader upon whose loyalty and courage we could rely. How strange it was that this quiet professor who had performed his every duty, monotonous in its regularity, should with a bound leap into view and establish in the minds of his audience that he possessed the qualifications of a brilliant and dashing leader. This was a revelation to his friends and acquaintances, and the estimate of him then formed was shown to be correct by after developments.

It was at the V.M.I. that I first came to know its superintendent and professors, including Jackson. Of the corps of cadets there were young men and boys, representing every State of the South and some of the States of the North. The corps was considered to be one of the finest the institution had ever had. Jackson, ever faithful to duty, now manifested great interest in the political conditions of the country and what they portended. He was instructor in artillery tactics, his favorite arm of the service. He now pushed work, giving great attention to the practical part. Drilling, limbering and unlimbering, target practice and the work incident thereto were very trying to boys in their teens in the hot spring sun, but neither heat nor cold had any terrors for Jackson when duty or the accomplishment of a purpose were involved.