

FROM THE PEOPLE

First Regiment Battle Flag.

To the Editor of The American:

In the article in to-day's American, noting the return of the "captured" (?) battleflag of the First Regiment, Tennessee Volunteers, C. S. A., it is stated that "ten color-bearers were killed while supporting the flag at the battle of Mill Springs, Ky." This is an error of your reporter, or his informant. The First Tennessee was not at Mill Springs (or "Fishing Creek," as the battle was generally called in the Confederate army), but was in the battle of Perryville, Ky., Oct. 8, 1862, where its loss was terrible, amounting to an average of 68 per cent., and much heavier than that of any regiment in the battle. The loss in Company "B," which I had the honor to command, was 90 per cent. It is to this battle that the article refers.

I have never believed that our battleflag was lost on that occasion, or in any other battle during the war, until the regiment surrendered, with the balance of Cheatham's division, in North Carolina, April, 1865, and probably our old shot-torn flag was not then surrendered, as Wm. A. Allen, of our regiment, and now living in Nashville, has had in his possession for many years a tattered battleflag which is claimed to have been the old flag of the First Tennessee, and which that regiment gallantly bore on many a bloody field, including Perryville.

As to the flag at Perryville, where the Federals claimed they captured it, the facts are as follows, according to my memory: One regiment charged and captured Parsons battery of four brass 12-pound guns, which was supported by the First Wisconsin Infantry. The fighting was terrific, and the loss in our regiment fearful, as has been stated, though it inflicted even a greater loss on the Wisconsin regiment, and on the artillery company handling the battery. In charging up the hill on which the battery was posted, Color-Sergeant Mitchell, bearing our flag, was killed, and every one of his eight Color Corporals fell about the same instant; four of them killed dead. One of the killed was Eugene ("Spludge") Wharton, brother of Aaron Wharton, of Berry, Demoville & Co. I do not now remember the names of the other Color-Corporals.

At the fall of the flag, with its bearer and the eight other immediate supporters, Sergt. Maj. John W. Carter, who was fighting in the ranks of my company, sprang for the flag, followed by Sergt. "Ted" James, also of my company. Carter had scarcely straightened up with the colors, when his right thigh was broken by a minnie ball and as he reeled and was falling he shouted to Sergt. James, who had reached his side and had already grasped the flag. "Here, Ted, take it. I am shot!"

I was lying but a few feet distant, with my left thigh broken, and witnessed this scene, and heard Carter's words distinctly above the roar and din of battle.

Sergt. James moved forward holding aloft the colors, but had proceeded but a few steps when he fell, badly wounded. Adjt. T. H. McKinney, then caught up the colors and that was the last I saw of them, but as the battery was captured and remained deserted and alone on the hill only a few yards from where I lay, while our forces continued to steadily drive the enemy until the darkness of night put an end to the bloody conflict, I have never been able to see any possible chance for the enemy to have captured the flag of the First.

Sergt. Maj. Carter died of his wound about a month after the battle. Sergt. James recovered, but was killed later in the war while on scouting service. Adjt. McKinney survived the war, and was in business for some time at Columbia, Tenn. B. P. STEELE

Tullahoma, Tenn., Sept. 17, 1905