

suppressed, always cheerful. How many of the Yerger families were there? There are five brothers, all lawyers, and good ones.

26th. Returned to Brandon. Nothing of note occurred between the 26th and 30th.

Judge Shall Yerger was a neighbor of mine on Deer Creek, near Greenville, Miss. He was an eminent jurist and able judge. He maintained almost absolute silence in his court. Except those engaged in a case, no one was permitted to talk above a whisper. He was fond of telling anecdotes to good and appreciative listeners. His aversion to the use of liquor was marked, and he condemned playing cards for money.

Now it happened in some way that the grand jury of Washington County had indicted his nephew, who was sheriff of the county, Dr. Finley, and some others for playing cards for money. At the meeting of the court, when the nephew's case was called he pleaded guilty, and, after some good advice, the judge imposed on him a fine of fifty dollars. When Dr. Finley's case was before the court his attorney declared the witness was revealing the secrets of the bedchamber. Yet he was found guilty on two indictments. The Judge sat in a rocking-chair, and before he pronounced sentence he occupied about ten minutes in delivering a homily on the impropriety of an accomplished gentleman, who by his profession had the entrée to all the best families, who should, while perhaps the shadow of death was hovering over his patient, be so indifferent as to play cards and distress the family, . . . ending in fining the Doctor fifty dollars in each case in the most imperturbable manner, and saying the Doctor would stand committed until the fine was paid. To this the Doctor observed: "May it please your honor, you know that we all keep our funds in New Orleans, and I can only pay by a draft." He was informed that was a matter between him and the officers of the court. So he finally sat down, and as the Judge was indebted to Finley for professional services, he drew the check on *him*, and handed it to the sheriff, who gave it to the clerk, who in turn passed it to the Judge. He glanced over it, all the while rocking gently, and without a change of countenance handed it back to the clerk with the quiet remark: "*The court remits the fine imposed on Dr. Finley.*"

On landing in Vicksburg one day, and when walking to the hotel, he was met by a man to whom he owed a small bill, who,

after the usual salutations of the day, said to the Judge: "I have some debts to pay, and I wish you would hand me the small amount you owe me." "Sir," said the Judge, "have you the audacity to ask me to pay my debts while your own are unpaid? Go and pay your debts first, then you can with propriety ask me to pay mine," and left him to analyze the sophistry of his advice.

When Gen. Frederick Steele was sent to Deer Creek by Gen. Grant to destroy all mills that could supply the garrison in Vicksburg with flour, and bring away the live stock, he reached Judge Shall Yerger's about noon, and he and his staff were invited to dine with them. Steele gave positive orders only to break the machinery of the grain mill, and to burn nothing. While they were at dinner a servant woman rushed into the dining room and exclaimed: "O missus, the ginhouse is on fire." Mrs. Yerger rose from her seat in great excitement, but the Judge said in the most quiet manner: "Sit down, my dear, sit down; Gen. Steele's troops are doing this complimentary to us for the hospitality shown him." Gen. Steele left the table, and in every way tried to discover who set the building on fire, and failed. Steele was a gentleman always.

31st. This morning it was springlike, but after a while far distant thunder was heard. Nearer and nearer it came, until at last the storm burst on us in all its fury. The rain was violent, accompanied with hailstones as large as hen's eggs. Next, the wind veered around to the north-west, and it became very cold and snow fell. After dark two men brought to the office a benevolent man from Connecticut, a prisoner, and some papers that were found on his person. From these I discovered that he was cultivating some plantations in cotton on the banks of the Mississippi, near Red River. That he had permits from the Freedmen's Bureau to visit his plantation between certain gunboat stations at will, etc. He was, he argued, doing the work of a Christian in cultivating abandoned lands, bringing wealth out of the earth, giving employment to the idle, in making the slaves work, etc. I asked him whose place he was on, or made his home. He told me. I inquired if the owner was on the plantation. He replied in the affirmative. To another question he said that he occupied the dwelling and the proprietor the overseer's house, and then gave the details of working the crop and dividing the same. I did not agree with him, and told the guard, who had heard all, to put him in the guardhouse in the town. They wished to carry him to camp. I would not permit it. Next day I sent him to Gen. Polk. He was no doubt a charitable man, for he had left his New England home, and was kindly cultivating these plantations to prevent them from growing up in weeds and briars, but there were some *facts* that upset his *theory* of philanthropy.

January 1, 1864. It is very cold, and the ground is frozen hard. I dined at Mr. Proctor's. Among the guests were Drs. Langley and Thornton, Capt. Smith, and Mr. Whitfield.

7th. Received orders to move my command to Meridian. For want of transportation, troops were not sent until the 9th. On the 10th, when I left Brandon, people were sliding, and some skating, on the pond near the depot. Ice two inches thick. During the remainder of January there is nothing in my diary worth recording here.

February 1. This morning I was directed to hold my division in readiness to move to Jackson. On the evening of the 2d I was sent for by Gen. Polk and told to move as soon as possible. I reached Jackson at 5 P.M. on the 4th. I found Gen. S. D. Lee about sixteen miles in front of Jackson skirmishing with the enemy, who were advancing on Jackson under Sherman. Telegraphed Gen. Polk that the enemy, 25,000 strong, was advancing, and their destination, *Meridian*. Also wrote him to the same effect. I had now in Jackson only 2,200 men, and I had no artillery horses, no wagons, no ambulances.

5th. In constant communication with Gen. S. D. Lee and Gen. Loring. I informed the latter that the enemy would be in Jackson before he could get here. So Loring went to Madison Station, and said he would cross the Pearl river at Culley's Ferry. All stores were now sent to Meridian, and stores from Brandon were ordered to be sent early. The enemy pressed Lee hard. By every telegram Lee said he wished to swing to the left and not cross the river, and remain west of the Pearl.

I telegraphed Gen. Forrest the strength and position of the enemy. In the evening I received a dispatch from Polk to continue labor on the railroad. Indiscreet order to execute to-day, and I will postpone it. At 4 P.M. I crossed the river and started the troops for Brandon, hastened the loading of the trains, and then myself and staff returned to the city. I found the Federal troops in possession of the western part of the town, so we turned round and had a race with their troops for the bridge (a pontoon bridge) and ordered it taken up. As the end was being cut loose one of Gen. Lee's staff officers (his doctor) sprung his horse on the bridge and cried out that Lee's force was in the city and would have to cross here. Replaced it. At this moment the enemy lined the high bank and opened fire on us. We soon threw some of the plank into the river and knocked the bottoms out of the boats. Lee got out of the city by the Canton road. Under fire of their batteries, in the dark, the infantry marched for Brandon. Maj. Storrs, my chief of artillery, a most gallant man, was left behind to get his horses out of the cars and bring on the guns, which he did under fire of the enemy. I left a squadron of cavalry to watch the enemy at the crossing. Next day I moved on toward Barrett's mills.

On my arrival in Jackson I telegraphed Lee that I would join him, and also sent to him my aid, Yerger, with the message that I would join him and risk a battle if he advised it. He thought it not proper to do so considering Loring had declined to give battle. On the 7th, moved on and encamped near Morton. I found Loring here with his division.

8th. This morning Loring placed the whole force present at my com-

mand to face about, form line of battle, and give the enemy a fight. I formed this line two miles from town. Some skirmishing ensued. We held a good position and the troops were in fine spirits, but the enemy would not attack us. At a council held it was deemed best to continue to fall back and await the arrival of Baldwin's Brigade and Lee with his cavalry, so we marched all night to Hillsboro. All this time the enemy spread the report that they were en route for Mobile.

9th. Gen. Polk arrived this morning. He had been at Mobile, caught the contagion, and ordered me at once to Newton Station with the brigades of Quarles, McNair, Ector, and Cockrell, there to take trains and proceed to Mobile, take command, and defend the city, as I outranked Gen. Maury. After a tedious march all night we reached the station, thirty miles distant, by daybreak. Here I found trains enough for the brigades of Quarles and McNair. These two brigades, after arriving at Meridian, were carried to Mobile. About noon Polk arrived and told me to remain, as Gen. Maury was sent there by the War Department. Loring marched by dirt road.

11th. This afternoon the brigades of Ector and Cockrell, and the remaining batteries left for Meridian, where we arrived before dark. These two brigades were detained, and did not go to Mobile.

14th. At 7 P.M. started for Almucho, and after a tedious march encamped beyond the town. Next day marched to Gaston.

16th. Started early this morning, my division in advance. Gen. Polk's headquarter wagons and cows took the road to Moscow, and we to Lewis's Ferry. Reached there at 11 A.M. Found the engineers there with three steamers and three (decked) scows, with which to make a pontoon bridge over the Tombigbee. It was apparent that they would not span the river. The steamer Admiral came down and "rounded to," and then started down the river at full speed. She was necessary for the bridge, so I sent the steamer Clipper after her, with Lieut. Freeman and a guard on board, to capture her. She was overtaken six miles below and brought back.

It was now 12 M., and nothing had been done to bridge the river. My advanced train had reached the river at 2 P.M. the day previous, and were crossing the wagons on scows, and by dusk had eighty on the other side. At 1:30 P.M., Gen. Polk arrived, and in his presence I remarked to the engineer officer that "it was time to go to work," when the General in an abrupt manner said: "If Gen. French pleases, I have given my orders." Be that as it may, nothing had been done by his orders to get the army over, and there would have been no bridge had I not caught the steamer Admiral. When at last the bridge was finished, all my division train had been ferried over save six wagons, and it was about 2 A.M. before it was all over. Then Loring's Division had to cross.

Gen. Polk had been an Episcopal bishop, and enjoyed the best the land afforded. The matin songs of the birds disturbed not his morning repose. The glorious sun rose too early for him to see it from the mountain top. It showed its face there at an unseemly hour. But when the "drowsy morn" was passed, and

the milkmaid had drawn tribute from the cows, and the coffee-pot was steaming on the hearth, and the light rolls were hot by the fire, and the plump, fine capon, with sides well lined with fat, was broiling on the coals, sending a savory odor through the apartments, the Bishop would arise, his face radiant with joy. He was a valiant trencherman, but when the repast was over he threw aside the surplice. The priest became a warrior when he girded on his saber, and sallied forth a paladin in the strife.

During all the long retreat from Jackson to this place we have done but little fighting with the infantry. It has nearly all been done by the cavalry and artillery.

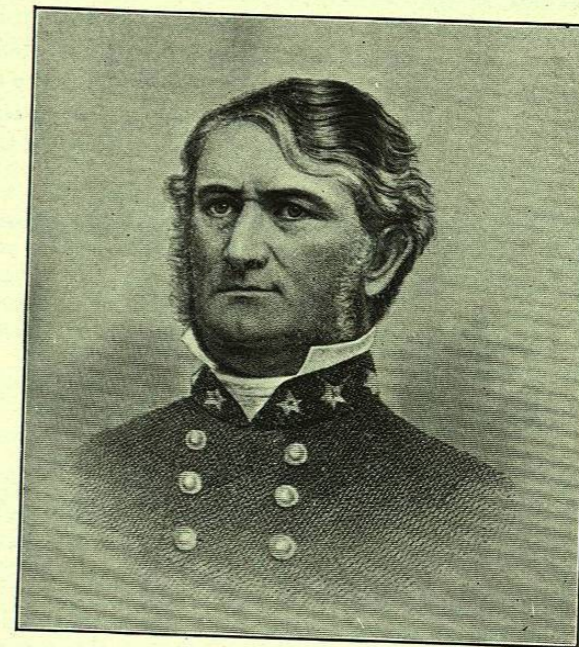
18th. Moved to Demopolis and encamped there. It is very cold and snow is falling. Mr. Fournier gave me rooms at his house. He came to Demopolis with Gen. Le Febre, who came to the United States after the abdication of Napoleon. I received letters from home.

21st. Went to Judge Dixon's, a neighbor of mine, and we attended divine service at the Episcopal Church. The Rt. Rev. Bishop Wilmer preached an eloquent sermon. The congregation is under the charge of Mr. Beckwith, who formerly resided on Deer Creek and was acquainted with my family. [He was afterwards Bishop of Georgia.]

26th. Left on a ten days' leave of absence to visit Columbus, Ga. On the cars were Gens. Hardee, Loring, Withers, and Walthall. On arrival in Columbus I went to Gen. A. Abercrombie's in Russell County, Ala.; remained there till Monday morning, and arrived in Demopolis on the 11th of March; remained in camp there until the 31st, when I started for Lauderdale with my division. In Demopolis I met many agreeable families. Among them were Mr. Lyons, Fournier, Glovers, Thornton, Lightfoot, Inges, Sheadwicks, and others. I remained at Lauderdale, Miss., until the 20th of April, when I received orders to move to Tuscaloosa. *En route* I passed through Gainesville, and entered Tuscaloosa on the 26th. I reviewed the troops one morning for Gen. Hodge, and the same day I reviewed the cadets at the University of Alabama. Among the pleasant people I met in Tuscaloosa were W. S. and C. M. Foster, Misses Annie Fiquet, Belle Woodruff, Cassady, Edden, Searcy, and others. I called to see J. E. Davis, brother of the President.

On the 4th of May Gen. Polk was ordered by Adj. Gen. Cooper, also by Gen. Johnston, to move Gen. Loring and all available force to Rome. A consequence of these orders was that I, being at Tuscaloosa, Ala., received from Polk, at Demopolis, at 9 A.M. on the 5th, orders to halt Sears's brigade, then near Selma, and send it to Montevallo, a station on the railroad to Rome, and concentrate my division at Montevallo.

At the time this order was received Cockrell's Brigade was partly away up in North Alabama in the counties of Marion,



LEONIDAS POLK.

Walker, etc., by order of Gen. Polk. Ector's Brigade was with me in Tuscaloosa, and Sears's north of Selma. Immediately orders were given to concentrate, as may be found in "War Records," Vol. 38, Part IV., and in this volume will be found many orders and letters pertaining to this movement.

Gen. Sears's Brigade, on May 5, was nearer Rome than Loring at Demopolis, and was at Montevallo on the 9th when Gen. Polk arrived there, and *could have been sent with him to Resaca* had transportation been provided. My diary records these vexatious delays, and that the superintendent of the railroad received no orders to move my division until Tuesday, the 10th, and that he was to have the cars there on Thursday, the 12th. Polk's administrative ability was not largely developed so as to anticipate the plainest necessity for coming events if he were accountable for these delays and others.

May 7. We left Tuscaloosa for Montevallo. I found there the brigade of Mississippians, commanded by Gen. Sears, that is to form a part of my division. *On the 9th Gen. Polk arrived.* He directed that five days' rations be cooked at once, and that Sears's Brigade should leave that afternoon for Blue Mountain by railroad. How easy it is to talk about such things! There was no meal at the commissary's and no cars for the troops.

10th. No trains yet; raining hard; Ector's Brigade arrived. Sent all the artillery horses by wagon road.

11th. Rain, rain, and thunder, and no trains yet for the troops. I wonder if there is a commander of this department.

12th. No trains yet. I resolved to march the troops, but met Col. Sevier, of Polk's staff, and he assures me that he will have transportation. Some of my men got on a passing train. I am informed that no grain was sent up last night for the artillery horses. Can it be that Gen. Polk knows nothing about these matters?

13th. To-day I got the remainder of Sears's Brigade off; and through the night, Ector's troops. Cockrell arrived with his brigade. I had sent him, by order of Gen. Polk, north of Tuscaloosa on an important expedition.

Struck tents and left for Blue Mountain. Sears was thirty-six hours on a train. Such delays were distressing.

Rode this morning, the 16th, into Rome. Yesterday the enemy's cavalry was within two miles of the city. Gen. Sears arrived, and at 10 P.M. his brigade was sent on the cars to Kingston.

17th. Sent two batteries by dirt road, also by trains, to Kingston. About 1 P.M. to-day, as I was putting Ector's Brigade on the cars for Kingston, I was informed by Brigadier Davidson that the enemy was within two miles of the town, on the right bank of the Oostanoula river, and that he had but one hundred and fifty men (mounted) to check them.

That you may the better comprehend the situation of troops, Federal and Confederate, I will state that on the 13th Gen. Johnston, on his retreat from Dalton, had reached Resaca, a town on the right bank of the Oostanoula, and was there attacked by Gen. Sherman on the 14th and 15th. On the 15th Sherman's army began crossing the river, and our troops also. On the 16th both armies were south of the river, Johnston's force falling back on Kingston and the Federals in pursuit. Polk, with Loring's Division, was with Johnston at Resaca, and two brigades of mine would have been there only for the want of transportation at Montevallo as stated.

So when I found the enemy at Rome, no alternative presented itself but to put Ector in the trenches over the Oostanoula, and hold the town until Cockrell arrived, who was, in the morning, thirty-two miles distant. A strong line of skirmishers was advanced, which was soon engaged with the enemy. During the afternoon Gen. J. T. Morgan arrived and said that his command was en route to Rome from Adairsville, and that he and Gen. Ferguson were both hard pressed by the enemy. At 4 P.M. Gen. Ross (cavalry) arrived with two regiments. The men were dismounted and placed on the hills. Davidson, with a few cavalry, moved on the enemy's right. Then, at 6 P.M., Ross, with his men, charged their line of skirmishers and drove them back to the main line. Hoskins, with two guns and all the fragments of dismounted men and the like, was placed on the hills north of the town on the left bank of the river to at least intimidate the Federals. In this fight I did not lose over one hundred men, and they were mainly from Ross's Brigade.

During all this day constant communications passed between me and Gens. Polk and Johnston urging me not to fail to join the retreating army. Cockrell's Brigade arrived at dusk, having marched thirty-two miles, and were at once furnished cars and started for Kingston at 10 P.M. Ector's Brigade reached Kingston at 7:30 A.M. Before we left Rome I had all the horses, stores, sick, and wounded removed. When we reached Kingston, on the 18th, I found Gen. Johnston moving, with his army, to Cassville, and I marched my division there also, and joined Gen. Polk and encamped near headquarters.

It was an error to not have had Polk's Corps concentrated and well in hand to unite with Johnston to oppose Sherman's ad-

vance from Dalton, considering the month of May was passing and the time for active movements had arrived. As it was, they were widely separated. On the 4th of May Gen. Polk was ordered to concentrate his command at Rome. From causes noted in my diary the last brigade did not reach there until the 17th.

With Gen. W. T. Sherman, above Dalton, Ga., in command of a hundred thousand men, it behooved either the War Department at Richmond, or Gen. J. E. Johnston, in command of the Army of Tennessee, to have concentrated the Army of Mississippi under the command of Gen. Polk, and held it ready to join the Army of Tennessee; whereas it was widely separated. April 26, I was in Tuscaloosa, Ala., and ordered by Gen. Polk to send a brigade north to the counties as stated. The consequence of all this was only one division of the Army of Mississippi reached Johnston before the battle of Resaca was fought, on May 13-15.