

"Bill Arp" was Charles Henry Smith, 8th GA, who served on
Bartow's staff

THE CONSTITUTION. ATLANTA GA. SUNDAY JULY 25 1888

ARP'S WEEKLY BUDGET.

REMINISCENCES OF THE FIRST BATTLE OF MANASSAS.

A Vivid and Realistic Description of the Scene at Bull Run—The Sunday After the Fight—The Surgeon's Work—Burying the Dead—Marching With Stonewall Jackson.

Twenty-five years! A quarter of a century has passed since the first battle of Manassas. A battle that made a more lasting impression upon the nation than any that occurred during the war. It was the first shock of the earthquake. The first blood, the first glory and the first grief. We had read about wars all our lives and about bloody battles where thousands and thousands were slain. We had in earliest childhood looked at the pictures and wondered and wondered. The few books that had them were almost worn out with our thumbing the leaves and we would talk over the same old heroes and wonder again. Our mothers made us read the Bible every Sunday and when we came to a big battle our minds were filled with awe at the contemplation of bloody things. What a wonderful hero was Samson who seized an old jawbone of an ass and like a mighty giant went threshing around smiting the Philistines hip and thigh, and never stopped until he had slain a thousand men. Then we came down to the revolution where our forefathers fought, and there were the pictures of Bunker Hill and Lexington and Yorktown, that were nearer kin. But still it was all a fanciful dream. Nearly fifty years had passed since Jackson fought at New Orleans, and those heroes were dead. Here and there was a man who fought in Mexico, but they were of a past generation, and that war was not intensified by a long quarrel among brethren—people of the same blood and nation. The north and south had been quarreling for more than fifty years, and at last had come to blows and to blood. The chip on the hat had been knocked off.

What an awful scene it was, that first battle. At home it was awful when one man was suddenly killed. It startled a whole community, and the news of it was carried from nabor to labor until it was the talk of the county. My elder brother was a doctor, and I was permitted to look on once when Dr. Wildman cut a man's leg off, and I saw the quivering flesh and the arteries, and the blood, and the thigh bone severed with the saw, and heard the poor man's groans, and I had not forgotten that. But here were men, young men, healthy and strong and brave, shot down by the score. Many were dead and many were dying, and they were all around me. The pine thicket and the open field close by, where the Eighth Georgia and Fourth Alabama fought side by side, was specked with them. That pine grove and field was a terrible shock to me, for my friends were there and some of my kindred. The dead seemed asleep with their arms near by. The wounded asked for water. Their surviving comrades had left them to pursue an enemy that was still fighting, though retreating. We hurried to the branch for water. We rode to the rear for help—for ambulances. We found the wounded all along the route and the news was that Bartow and Bee were killed and Colonel Gardner was wounded, and a prisoner. Shout after shout was heard as the front ad-

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vanced and the enemy retreated. Everywhere there was wild hurrying to and fro. Ambulances went on the run to the battle field. Couriers with orders flew in hot haste over hill and plain. Generals with their staff galloped from hill to hill to overlook the movements of their troops who were surging and swaying at double quick and yelling like wild Camanches as they drove back the enemy and broke their columns. The air was filled with smoke. The minnie balls rattled through the pines or spent their force against the fences or upon the ground. The cannonading was incessant and was continued long after the enemy was out of reach. The terrible sound of it lent wings to their flight and they left everything behind them. Night shut down upon the scene and brought rest—rest to the weary, but not to the wounded. All night long we watched and waited, and nursed and comforted them as best we could. The surgeon's knife was busy, and as one poor fellow was attended to and moved aside the doctor wiped the perspiration from his brow and hurriedly said, "next." There was not a groan nor a moan as arms and legs were hastily amputated. I don't believe that the boys had much feeling then. The excitement and the victory had wrought them up to a pitch that smothered feeling. They talked and laughed and cried as the surgeons dressed their wounds. I saw Dr. Miller cut a ball from Jet Howard's hip that had come nearly through from the other side, and Jet stood up to have it done, and as the ball dropped into the doctor's hand he seized it and said, "I wouldnt take a thousand dollars for this." It was Sunday. What a day for such deeds of carnage. The next day was devoted to the dead. Our own dead were buried in spots selected by their friends and some rude headboard marked the name. The federals were lined in trenches with head to feet in nameless graves. They were thick in some places, so thick that one could step from corpse to corpse. It was the third day before some of them were buried, and they had swollen and looked fat and bloated, and some of their clothing had bursted with swelling flesh. There was a company of Zouaves in Turkish costume, who looked like a race of giants sleeping there. Dead horses strawed the ground, and they were swollen too and their legs stood out without touching the ground, and the buzzards sat upon their heads and feasted upon their eyeballs as the sweetest morsel to begin with. Artillery horses fell dead upon each other and were cross and piles and the harness had to be cut away.

This battle was insignificant when compared

This battle was insignificant when compared with those that came after, but it was so that the soldiers and the nation got used to blood. Within a year the shock of it had passed. The horror of it was gone. The army wagons marched over the battle field of Seven Pines a month or so later, after it was fought and as the wheels crashed across the shallow trenches where the dead were buried, one could see an arm or a leg shoot up or hear the bones crack with the passing weight. The teamsters looked back and smiled or cracked a heartless joke—blood and death and corpses are nothing in war—nothing when one gets hardened to them. It is all business and destiny. No wonder that Bonaparte fought on and felt no sympathy. He was used to it and the dead were nothing. It was no more than a game of chess and the people were the pawns. The anguish of a dying man on the field, strife is enough. But more than this is the silent grief of widowed wife and fatherless children, and of the mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers whose unbidden tears flow on and flow ever for the lost one. Is there no remedy for this curse? Oh why will nations fight? Why will people fight? Here in a time of peace one man kills another and brings a woe and a grief that, like Banquo's ghost, will never, never down. Could it not have been avoided? When a man is crazed by liquor is it courage to hunt him down like he was a beast and slay him? or is it not a better courage to avoid him and give his friends and kindred a chance to save him? What is our country coming to that every young man carries a weapon of death in his pocket? They did not use to do so. I understand that most every lad in our community carries a pistol. What for and why? Are our laws and our courts powerless to protect our people? Have we no judge nor juries? Have even the boys got to protect and defend themselves? A man may be constrained to carry a pistol on some emergency, but I believe Judge Hammond was right when he charged the grand jury that a man who habitually carried a pistol was a coward. The pistol may make a bully of him and then he is still more contemptible, for he is a dangerous fool. I heard a young man confess that he carried a pistol for two years and one morning he forgot it and he felt so helpless that if a feller had have crooked his finger at him he would have run like a turkey. This made him ashamed of himself and he discarded it for good. Whisky and pistols are in copartnership, and it is a bad firm.

Twenty-five years ago General Johnston's

army left Winchester on the sly and hurried to Manassas, while Patterson was waiting for a fight at Buckletown, a few miles out from Winchester. For days and weeks they had been sparring at each other, and we thought every day they would fight. Old Joe left enough troops skirmishing around to keep Patterson from suspecting any trick, but the bulk of his splendid army got marching orders in a still, quiet way, and by night were near the Shenandoah. We crossed that river by torch light. It was a wild, exciting scene to see the boys wading through at the ford and holding their guns and cartridge boxes over their heads. There were some little fellows along in our crowd and they had to tip toe to keep the water out of their mouths, but they got there all the same. There were no dry clothes for next day, but they rested on the grass around Paris and let the morning sun give them a dry suit. I remember that there was a child born to us at my house on that eventful night, and a year after when I went home on furlough I travelled with a man who was very inquisitive, and when he asked me how many children I had I told him six, and that I had never seen one of them. He pondered it over a few minutes and said: "That is very strange, and I would like to ask how it has happened that that you have never seen your children." Said I, "My friend, I said that I had never seen one of them, for one was born after I left home last June." He saw the point, and troubled me no more.

The soldiers are having reunions now, and I am glad to see they are becoming so universal at the south. It is sad to see how few of a company have survived the perils of the war and the surer perils of death since the war. One by one they go. But let them meet and take comfort, and let their hearts twine together as they talk over the sad but glorious past. A regiment—will make about a company now, but in a few more years it will take a brigade. But few are under forty-five, and many have a wound that has never healed or a disease that will not cure. God bless them all, and inspire their children to love their country as their fathers did.

BILL ARP.