

G.B. Moon Article in Confederate Veteran

A BOY'S EXPERIENCE IN SEEING A BATTLE.

G.B. Moon, Unionville, Tenn., writes:

On the eve of the battle of Murfreesboro, December 31, 1862, news reached Unionville that Gen. Bragg would attack the enemy early next morning. In company with several friends I decided to go and see the battle, as I had never been on a battlefield. Before sunrise the next morning we were on the road. Upon reaching the battlefield we were halted by guards whom we flanked, and we pressed on toward the smoke of battle. Near the edge of a small field, where many had fallen, I discovered a saber bayonet stuck up between two dead soldiers, one a Federal and the other a Confederate, lying close together, as if they had been placed in that position and marked with the bayonet for future recognition. I took the bayonet, which I still have, though I have often regretted doing so. Both of these soldiers may have been lost to relatives by my thoughtlessness. We did not reach the line of battle that evening, and at sunset went to the hospital, in a church near the town. Here I saw more horrible sights, if possible, than I had already seen. The groans and cries of suffering soldiers rang long in my ears. One little fellow particularly attracted my attention. "O, sir, if you have a sharp knife, please cut this ball out of my hand! It is nearly killing me. The surgeon says there is no ball in my hand!" he cried in agony. Dr. B.F. Duggan, of Unionville, happened to come in about that time, and said to the sufferer: "Let me see your hand." "Yes, sir: please help me if you can. Are you a doctor?" "I have dressed many soldiers' wounds," said the doctor, and he soon found the ball and cut it out.

Wandering over the battlefield that night, we reached the field hospital of the Twenty-Third Tennessee Regiment. Here I learned that my brother Richard had been wounded that evening, but I could not learn how severely. Early next morning one of our company dismounted, and, divesting a dead Federal soldier of knapsack, pistols, gun, and all accouterments, armed himself as a soldier. When questioned he said: "I am going to fight to-day if the battle opens up." In a short time we were with the Twenty-Third Regiment. We were all mounted, and soon after we arrived the enemy, supposing we were officers, threw some shells at us. The second shell exploded in the trees above our heads. I spent most of the day searching for my fallen brother, but all in vain. He sleeps among the unknown dead. I went home, but returned again the third day to search for some traces of my brother Richard. I met the army on the retreat from Shelbyville, when I gave my basket of rations to the boys and turned sorrowfully homeward.