

ton, but is taken from a letter from Mitchel to Stanton, speaking of a raid of John Morgan in Mitchel's rear, of the bad disposition of troops guarding his rear, of their not being under his command as unusual in war, and asking the views of the Government as to the use of negroes for information. The third quotation ("Official Records," Vol. X., Part II., p. 163) is from a telegram sent the same day as the letter, and designed to hasten a decision in the matter of the use of slaves. The whole correspondence means that with the negro picket line Mitchel felt safe in his position. Buell's order rendered such picket line impossible. Without the aid of the negroes Mitchel did not feel assured of being able to hold the territory.

Let us next glance at the reports of the "occurrences" which General Buell says were reported with the "flourish of a great battle." The only occurrences which required report while Mitchel was in north Alabama were the captures of Huntsville and of Bridgeport. Here is Mitchel's dispatch to Buell as to the former:

After a forced march of incredible difficulty, leaving Fayetteville yesterday at 12 noon, my advanced guard, consisting of Turchin's brigade, Kennett's cavalry, and Simonson's battery, entered Huntsville this morning at 6 o'clock. The city was taken completely by surprise, no one having considered the march practicable in the time. We have captured about two hundred prisoners, fifteen locomotives, a large amount of passenger and box and platform cars, the telegraph apparatus and office, and two Southern mails. We have at length succeeded in cutting the great artery of railway communication between the Southern States. ("Official Records," Vol. X., Part II., p. 104.)

If I were to rewrite this announcement to-day for publication, there is but one word I would change. Though there were difficulties encountered, the march was especially notable for its rapidity rather than difficulty. Fifty-seven miles were traversed in forty-eight hours. If there is any record of such rapid marching by a body of four thousand infantry and artillery towards the enemy elsewhere during the war, I am not aware of it. As to the capture of Bridgeport: To Buell, after giving the method of his advance, Mitchel says: "Our first fire emptied the redoubt and breastworks, the enemy fleeing across the bridge, with scarcely a show of resistance." ("Official Records," Vol. X., Part I., p. 655.) To Stanton, Mitchel reported, "At our first fire the guard broke and ran." ("Official Records," Vol. X., Part II., p. 155.) There is certainly nothing of the "flourish of a great battle" in any of these reports.

General Buell, in referring to the plan of campaign given by Mitchel to Stanton July 7, 1862, and quoted in the biography, says: "No plan of campaign was proposed to me by General Mitchel; and no such controversy, or discussion, or series of consultations as would be inferred from the biography ever occurred between us." When General Buell arrived at Huntsville, Mitchel besought him, as I have stated in his biography ("Ormsby MacKnight Mitchel, Astronomer and General," Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), to move forward and occupy Chattanooga and the surrounding territory. I saw General Buell and General Mitchel myself, on the day after Buell's arrival, sitting over their maps from morning till noon at Mitchel's headquarters at Huntsville. I know of one other person who witnessed the scene, and possibly there may be

officers or men now living who remember it also. But it matters nothing whether they discussed the question before General Buell at the headquarters of the one or the other. That they discussed it is evident from the manuscript I have in my possession, addressed to the Secretary of War, July 7, 1862. It is in Captain E. W. Mitchel's handwriting, and is signed by General Mitchel himself. It begins, "*At your request* I present herewith a plan of campaign *recently presented by me to General Buell* after his arrival at Huntsville." That the Secretary of War had a right to ask Mitchel's views no one can doubt. Mitchel was then interested in a proposed expedition down the Mississippi River, which it was intended he should command, and had no personal interest in the field he had left. To decline to give his views to the Secretary on account of motives of delicacy towards Buell would have been nothing short of moral cowardice. There is no evidence that General Mitchel ever exerted the slightest influence to General Buell's discredit.

General Grant in his Memoirs has summed up, in these words, the probable advantages which would have accrued on prompt movements after the occupation of Corinth:

Bragg would then not [*i. e.*, if Buell had been sent from Corinth direct to Chattanooga as rapidly as he could march] have had time to raise an army to contest the possession of middle and east Tennessee and Kentucky; the battles of Stone River and Chickamauga would not necessarily have been fought; Burnside would not have been besieged in Knoxville without power of helping himself or escaping; the battle of Chattanooga would not have been fought. These are the negative advantages, if the term negative is applicable, which would probably have resulted from prompt movements after Corinth fell into possession of the National forces. The positive results might have been: a bloodless advance to Atlanta, to Vicksburg, or to any other desired point south of Corinth in the interior of Mississippi.

These remarks are applicable in this case, for Mitchel recommended a forward movement on July 1, and Bragg did not march into Kentucky till about two months later.

F. A. Mitchel.

General Robertson in the Gettysburg Campaign.

A RE-REJOINDER TO COLONEL MOSBY.

In his rejoinder in *THE CENTURY* for December, 1887,¹ in regard to the operations of my cavalry in the Gettysburg campaign, Colonel Mosby brings into prominence the fact that within twenty-four hours after General Stuart started, General Hooker changed from "defensive waiting" to aggressive movement, causing *two days* to be lost to General Stuart and fatally disrupting "all communication with Generals Lee and Ewell."

No matter how I performed the duty assigned to me, I could not have cured the fatal defect which Hooker's movement to the Potomac, so unexpected by General Stuart, had produced. The apparent discrepancy between statements made by me *as to the place* where I received the order from General Lee to hasten forward with my command is due to my reliance on the memory of my aides when writing in 1887 and to my own recollection in 1887. At neither time was I writing from the records, nor did I deem important the place where the

¹ See also *THE CENTURY* for May, 1887, and also for August, 1887, for the other articles in this discussion.

courier met me. And some apparent inconsistency is made to appear by Colonel Mosby's quotation from my letter in 1877 of the words, "to await further orders," and following them immediately with a quotation from my orders that I was to hold the mountain gaps "as long as the enemy remain in your [my] front in force." This attempt to convict me of contradictory statements fails when the orders are examined which direct me to hold the gaps — "unless otherwise ordered by General R. E. Lee, Lieutenant-General Longstreet, or myself [General Stuart]." The orders are set forth in my first communication,¹ and speak for themselves.

Colonel Mosby remarks that I have made "no explanation of *the delay*." There was no delay to explain. Had there been at that critical moment, General Lee would not have passed over so great a delinquency. The time occupied was no more than was required for the performance of the duty imposed by my orders.

The effort of Colonel Mosby to make it appear that I did not obey my orders as to the route I was to take fails when the orders are examined.

While it is true that they directed me to "cross the Potomac and follow the army, keeping on its right and rear," they also directed me to "cross the Potomac at the different points crossed by it [the army of General Lee]." It was left therefore to my discretion where I was to cross, according to the circumstances that might arise in the future. I exercised my discretion, and satisfied General Lee.

In paraphrasing General Jones's report, Colonel Mosby has suppressed a part of a short paragraph which I quote from the unpublished records. General Jones says :

WASHINGTON, May 27, 1888.

The three remaining regiments of the brigade accompanied General Robertson by way of Williamsport and Chambersburg, arriving at Cashtown July 3. Near this point an order from General Lee required a force of cavalry to be sent at once to the vicinity of Fairfield to form a line to the right and rear of our line of battle. In the absence of General Robertson I determined to move my command at once into position, which met with the approbation of the general, *who returned to camp before I was in motion.*

The important words which I have italicized are omitted in the paraphrase, in which Colonel Mosby lays particular stress on my "absence." I have only to notice another innuendo of Colonel Mosby by which he creates a wrong impression. He says: "As soon as the army returned to Virginia, General Robertson, at his own request, was relieved of command." There is enough truth in this statement to make a good false impression. It was in August that I applied for relief from command. Prostrated by illness and advised by my surgeon, Dr. Randolph, that my recovery depended on my getting better quarters and nursing than was possible in the open field near Culpeper Court House, I applied for leave. Accompanying the order detaching me from the Army of Northern Virginia, Major McClellan wrote: "The general [Lee] joins with me and with the other members of the staff in the hope that you may soon be restored to health and duty, and that every success may attend you." My purpose in asking a change was to recover my health. Upon recovery I was ordered to South Carolina.

I have dealt more at length upon Mosby's attack than its author merited, and solely because it was in the publications of THE CENTURY that his articles were to appear.

B. H. Robertson.



TOPICS OF THE TIME.

The Value of a Presidential Election.

THE month upon which we are entering will bring to a decision the twenty-sixth of our quadrennial Presidential elections; for, although the election is not technically complete until the electors have voted and their votes have been counted, yet public opinion has practically subordinated everything else to this single occasion of the choice of electors by the people. The "campaign" which began in June comes to an end in November: the blare of the brass bands dies away; the unsavory coal-oil torch, the oil-cloth uniforms, the transparencies, and the campaign banners unite in a general procession into another four-years' obscurity; and as we draw breath again we are pressed hard by the recurring question, Is the game worth the candle?

The source of the question is not necessarily in that political pessimism which is affected by so many who think that they thus secure for themselves a place a little higher than the common run of their fellow-citizens;

¹ See THE CENTURY for August, 1887.

it is much more commonly to be found in the conditions under which modern business is carried on. The actual volume of business has grown to proportions so enormous that the slightest interference with it now causes very heavy losses; and business methods are now so largely those of credit in its various forms that such losses tend to reduplicate themselves in a far more widely spread injury. A "blizzard" of three days' duration was only an annoying experience to our grandfathers: its effects nowadays may be marked in a strongly perceptible fall in the year's volume of business, perhaps in the failure of a number of railroads to pay dividends, in the consequent inability of many of their stockholders to carry out intentions on which other men had relied, and in the reverberation of loss in the most unexpected directions. If a bull in a china-shop is a proverbially undesirable visitant, the business interests of the United States can hardly be expected to welcome the irruption of the Presidential election, with its intense popular excitement, its general suspension of interest in everything else than the routine of business, and its occasional hints of the possibility,