



GEN. JAMES F. FAGAN.

BY C. W. WALKER, FAYETTEVILLE, ARK.

Fifty-two years have passed since the Southern soldiers, overwhelmed by vastly superior numbers, laid down their arms and returned to their homes to enter upon the peaceful pursuits of life. Among the many gallant defenders of the Southern cause in the Trans-Mississippi Department, none was more conspicuous for daring and heroic courage than James F. Fagan. He combined the dash of John Morgan with the dauntless courage of Pat Cleburne. Coming up from the ranks, his promotion was rapid—captain of a company, colonel of the 1st Arkansas Regiment, brigadier general of infantry, and then major general of cavalry. Never was promotion more rapid or more meritorious. I first saw General Fagan while encamped near Van Buren, Ark., in December, 1862. Brooks's Regiment (34th Arkansas Infantry), of which I was a member, that of Hawthorn's 6th Arkansas, King's 35th Arkansas, and Pleasants's 29th Arkansas Infantry were organized into a brigade, of which General Fagan was the beloved leader.

Crossing the Arkansas River at Van Buren on the 4th of December, 1862, we took up our line of march northward under the leadership of Gen. T. C. Hindman. At Oliver's

Store, on Lee's Creek, we received our battle flags and forty rounds of ammunition to the man, then went on to Prairie Grove, ten miles southwest of Fayetteville. At 11:30 A.M. on Sunday, December 7, 1862, we engaged General Herron, who was on his march westward to reënforce General Blunt,



GEN. JAMES F. FAGAN.

who was encamped at Cane Hill, eighteen miles southwest of Fayetteville. General Fagan, with his brigade alone, successfully met General Herron's division and repelled most gallantly every onslaught of the enemy, bivouacking on the field at the close of the battle. For five hours the battle raged under storm of shot and shell. In this battle General Fagan was conspicuous for his gallantry. The other battles in which he participated were Marks's Mill, on the Saline River, where he captured two regiments that were convoying a train of two hundred wagons loaded with provisions intended for General Steele, who a few days before was encamped at Camden. Here was a clean sweep, every man being captured and every wagon taken. Other battles in which General Fagan was engaged were: Helena, on the 4th of July, 1863; Ironton, Mo., in September, 1863; Jefferson City, Mo.; Little Blue, near Lexington, Mo.; Westport, now a part of Kansas City; and Newtonia, Mo., which was the last battle fought on General Price's raid through Missouri. To speak in detail of the many battles in which General Fagan took so conspicuous a part would extend this paper beyond the limits intended.

It was my great pleasure, accompanied by my daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Wickersham, to visit the beautiful home of the widow of General Fagan in Oakland, Cal. The sight of a splendid portrait of the General and also the sword which he so gallantly bore through the entire war suggested the writing of this memorial sketch, which, notwithstanding its imperfection, I hope may find a place in the CONFEDERATE VETERAN.

THE BATTLE OF HELENA, ARK.

One of the prominent events in General Fagan's distinguished career is appropriately given here, this having been furnished the VETERAN some years ago. This leading event was the battle of Helena, Ark., fought July 4, 1863, which was one of the most desperate fields of the war. "It is believed," says our correspondent, "that this estimate of the battle is fully warranted from the character of the defenses encountered, the incidents of the engagement, and the nature of the ground fought over, as set forth in the General's official report. An extract is also given from the official report of Lieutenant General Holmes, commanding the Trans-Mississippi Department at the time of the engagement, and a communication of Federal Commander Prentiss as to the valuable assistance of the gunboat Tyler, a formidable support of which the Confederates knew nothing. They fought rifle pits, fortifications, and forts, but did not know that they were also contending against a part of Porter's Mississippi Squadron."

The disposition for the attack was according to the following order:

GENERAL HOLMES'S ORDER FOR ATTACK ON HELENA.

"July 4, 1863.

"The attack on Helena will be made to-morrow morning at daylight, as follows:

"1. Major General Price, in command of McRae's and Parson's Brigade, will proceed by the best route, assume position, assault, and take Graveyard Hill at daylight.

"2. Brigadier General Walker, with his cavalry brigade, will in like manner proceed to the Sterling road, where he will hold himself in position to resist any troops that may approach Rightor's Hill; and when that position is captured, he will enter the town and act against the enemy as circumstances may justify.

"3. Brigadier General Fagan will proceed by the best route, assume position, and take the battery on Hindman's Hill at daylight.

"4. Brigadier General Marmaduke will proceed with his command by the best route, assume position, and take Rightor's Hill at daylight."



This picture shows the widow of General Fagan in the garden of her California home, and by her stands C. W. Walker holding the sword of his old commander.

Following is an extract from the official report of Lieut. Gen. T. H. Holmes, commander Trans-Mississippi Department, from "Records of the Union and Confederate Armies," Series I., Volume XXII., Part I.:

"The assault on the first line of rifle pits in front of Hindman Hill was made at a few minutes after daylight. General Fagan, at the head of his brigade, charged gallantly over four lines under a deadly fire from the rifle pits and guns on his front and a most disastrous enflading fire from Graveyard Hill previous to the attack of General Price. Having driven the enemy from and carried the fifth and last line of rifle pits, the brave men who had followed him thus far, overcome by sheer exhaustion resulting from the inordinate exertion of their difficult charges and the intense heat of the day, were unable to proceed farther. A charge upon the fort was, nevertheless, attempted and failed. The brigade, therefore, took shelter behind the inner line of breastworks, anxiously awaiting assistance. The assistance never arrived.

"Major General Price did not make his attack until after sunrise and more than an hour after the time named in the order. In explanation of this delay, his report states that, finding when he had gotten within a mile and a half of the position he had been ordered to take that his division would arrive on the ground prematurely, he ordered a halt and resumed his march at dawn of day."

REPORT OF GEN. JAMES F. FAGAN.

"HEADQUARTERS SECOND BRIGADE, CAMP AT SEARCY, ARK.,
July 21, 1863.

"Major: I have the honor to report as follows in regard to the part taken by my brigade in the attack on Helena upon the 4th inst.

"On the evening of the 3d inst. at dark I ordered Col. W. H. Brooks, with his regiment, one section of Etters's Battery of Light Artillery, commanded by Lieut. John C. Arnett, and three companies of cavalry commanded by Captain Benson, to move to the front in support of the cavalry, then within three miles of the town of Helena. About eleven o'clock at night, with the three remaining regiments, commanded respectively by Colonels King, Hawthorn, and Bell, and Blocker's Battery of Light Artillery, commanded by Capt. W. D. Blocker, I moved forward on the road to Helena. On joining Colonel Brooks where the old hill road leaves the Little Rock road, I ordered him to advance at once with his command on the latter road, to attack and engage the attention of the enemy south of the town, and hold his forces in the river pit on the river. At the same time I ordered Colonel Hawthorn, whose regiment was in advance, to lead the brigade forward on the hill road. This was promptly complied with, and the brigade moved on without interruption until within a mile of the waterworks of the enemy. At this point the road was completely filled with felled timber, the largest forest growth intermingling and overlapping its whole length, while on each side precipitous and impassable ravines were found running even to the very intrenchments of the enemy. It was utterly impossible to move my artillery or ammunition train along this road. The obstacles were so great, indeed, that I was under the necessity of directing every officer of my command to dismount and proceed on foot, a dire necessity which subsequent events gave me occasion seriously to deplore. After crawling through the interstices of the closely fitting limbs and boughs and climbing over the thickly matted timber for one mile, my line of skirmishers, who had been ordered by me not to fire, came within sight of the enemy. I

went to the front and could plainly see that the enemy was on the alert, evidently expecting and awaiting an attack.

"The order of the lieutenant general commanding was to assault the fortifications with the several attacking columns at daylight on the morning of the 4th. Not having been apprised of the obstructions on the road, I had made no arrangements to remove them. The limited time till daylight would not allow of any attempt even to take my artillery along. It was ordered to remain on the road, where the obstructions were first met with.

"To conform to orders, it was necessary for me to move with the utmost celerity. Freeing myself of everything but my column of infantry, I pushed forward with all the haste in my power. At daylight I reached and attacked the enemy in his works. Colonel Hawthorn, being in advance, was hurried rapidly into line on the right of the road which led directly up to the fort on Hindman's Hill. He at once engaged the enemy, who occupied their extreme or outer line of rifle pits. Bell's Regiment emerged next from the confused mass of felled timber and, coming up, was also double-quickened into line on the left of the road, engaging as they came into position the intrenched forces of the enemy over against them. King's Regiment brought up the rear. He rapidly threw his men into position and was ordered by me immediately to the support of Colonel Hawthorn.

"My entire force was now engaged. The assault on the rifle pits was made from both the right and the left of the road. Never did men behave with greater steadiness and gallantry than did the troops of those three regiments. Over the heavy timber, the deep gorges, and the precipitous banks they moved. Over opposite to them ran the long line of fortifications, toward which they moved with eager, anxious steps. Cowering behind their strong works, the enemy beheld the advance with consternation. Still on they moved unhesitatingly amid the leaden rain and iron hail. The gorge is passed, the ascent of the steep declivity is nearly gained, and the red line of rifle pits looms up clearly amid the uncertain light and haze of dawn. With a shout of triumph they rush toward it, and the enemy are driven pell-mell from one row of rifle pits to another.

"Up to this time there had been no attack at any other point. Daybreak had come and gone, and still the guns of my brigade and those of the enemy were the only ones that interrupted the stillness of the morning. Owing to this, my brigade was exposed to a constant and galling enfilading fire from the works on Graveyard Hill. This exposure, combined with the close and constant fire in our front, was most trying to the men. Their numbers were being rapidly decimated not only by the fire of the enemy, but by extreme exhaustion occasioned by their scaling the steepest of hills, made almost impassable by the quantities of timber cut down, which was of itself an almost insurmountable barrier to our advance.

"We reached and took possession of their four tiers of rifle pits. Now it was that the column commanded by Major General Price (Parsons's and McRae's Brigades) charged the works on Graveyard Hill, gallantly driving the enemy before them and taking possession of the fortifications and artillery. There remained yet one row of intrenchments between my brigade and the fort on Hindman's Hill. I ordered a charge. My men, though thoroughly exhausted and worn, answered with a shout and sprang forward most gallantly. This being the inner and last line of works between us and the enemy, it of course was defended with great stubbornness. It was of no avail. My men sprang forward bravely and defiantly

and after a severe contest succeeded in driving out the enemy, who fled, crowding back into the frowning fort and under cover of its heavy guns.

"The fort yet remained to be taken. Of all the many obstacles and threatening fortifications that opposed our advance that morning, there remained only the fort. All other obstacles, natural and artificial, had been overcome. Rugged and almost impassable ravines, the steepest and most broken hillsides, abatis, and line after line of breastworks had been passed and left behind. Before us there remained only the fort and the plain on which it was built. Notwithstanding the reduced condition of my command and the exhaustion of those yet remaining, I ordered a charge upon the fort. My colonels, King, Hawthorn, and Bell, did all in their power to encourage the men to the attack. The effort was made, but the prostrate condition of my command prevented success; and after losing in the attempt several gallant officers and many brave men, I formed again in the rear of the inner line of rifle pits, while the guns of the fort continued to pour forth a furious fire.

"It was now verging on eleven o'clock in the day. More than three hours before the guns on Graveyard Hill had been taken by our friends, and there seemed no obstacle in the way of their victorious march. Eagerly did we look to see their column coming to our aid, at first with the most undoubting hope and confidence, but less confidently as hour after hour went on and still they made not their appearance. Time wore on; the pleasant morning deepened into the sultriest and hottest of days. The thinned ranks of my regiments became thinner and thinner each moment. The guns of the enemy (not more than 100 or 150 yards distant) were telling sadly against us, while the heat, the want of water, and the toil were no mean auxiliaries. Still the brave men left stood manfully up to the discharge of their duty.

"At this time written orders were received from Lieutenant General Holmes directing that I withdraw my troops from the field and fall back to Allan Polk's, six miles in the rear. We retired from the field and fell back slowly to that point.

"I have, Major, the honor to be, with much respect, your obedient servant, JAMES R. FAGAN, *Brigadier General.*"
MAJ. W. B. BLAIR, *Assistant Adjutant General.*

GUNBOAT IN BATTLE OF HELENA.

"HEADQUARTERS DISTRICT OF EASTERN ARKANSAS,
HELENA, ARK., July 9, 1863.

"Rear Admiral David D. Porter, *Commanding Mississippi Squadron—Admiral:* I take pleasure in transmitting to you my testimony concerning the valuable assistance rendered me during the battle at this place on the 4th inst. by Lieutenant Commander James M. Pritchett, of the gunboat Tyler. I assure you, sir, that he not only acquitted himself with honor and distinction during the engagement proper, but with a zeal and patience as rare as they are commendable. When informed of the probability of an attack upon this place, he lost no time and spared no labor to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the topography of the surrounding country; and I attribute not a little of our success in the last battle to his full knowledge of the situation and his skill in adapting the means within his command to the end to be obtained. Nor can I refrain from mentioning that after the engagement, and while we were expecting a renewal of the attack, Commander Pritchett, commanding a division of your fleet, was unusually efficient in procuring timely reinforcements.

"Your obedient servant, B. M. PRENTISS, *Major General.*"

THE ROSTER OF FAGAN'S ESCORT.

The accompanying roll is almost, if not entirely, the membership of a company of cavalry organized as the personal escort of Maj. Gen. James F. Fagan, Trans-Mississippi Department, C. S. A. The company was never attached to any regiment and served in the capacity for which it was organized until the close of the war, surrendering at Shreveport, La., in May, 1865.

Col. S. H. Nowlin, former Chairman of the Historical Committee, U. C. V., received this roll from Capt. J. W. Rayburn, of Little Rock, Ark., one of the commissioned officers of the company. He was assisted in its compilation by John P. Smith, of Fort Smith, Ark., and J. F. Hopkins, of Mabelvale, Ark., both of whom were members of the company. The present addresses of those still living are given where known, and those known to be dead are so designated. The publication of this list may aid in locating many others or in reports of other deaths. Either of the above-named comrades will be glad to hear from any of the survivors.

Commissioned Officers.—W. B. Nowland, captain (dead); J. W. Rayburn, first lieutenant (dead); F. W. Nowland, second lieutenant, Memphis, Tenn.; George E. Sears, third lieutenant (dead).

Noncommissioned Officers.—E. G. Portlock, first sergeant (dead); John Ferguson, second sergeant (dead); H. L. Fletcher, third sergeant (dead); J. H. Black, fourth sergeant (dead); John P. Smith, fifth sergeant, Fort Smith, Ark.

Corporals.—R. W. Tinker, first corporal (dead); John Norris, second corporal; Robert Irons, third corporal.

Privates.—E. S. Adams, George Adams, Robert Armstrong, Morrilton, J. S. Britt, W. J. Bronaugh, H. Brown, Charles Buck, W. G. Butler (dead), Rufus Black, Samuel D. Butler (dead), ——— Bridges, P. R. Carrington, W. H. Causine (dead), William Clark, Coon Clark, Henry Davis, Charles Ellis, M. M. Erwin, Henry Flora, W. F. Ferguson, Caleb Fletcher, Thomas J. Gatlin, John Green (dead), S. D. Gustine, R. H. Graves, George P. Grass, Kansas City, Mo., Robert Gibson, Siloam Springs, Ark., Ferd Hamilton (dead), J. W. Hawkins (dead), R. Holdman, A. Hood, J. F. Hopkins (dead), J. B. Howell (dead), F. Irman, Black Rock, Ark., Luther Imboden, Dick Jarrett, Thomas Jones, Charles Kimber (dead), William Lee, W. E. McPherson, Henry McKnett (dead), Richard McCree, J. W. Moore (dead), P. G. Moore, W. C. Mitchell (dead), J. J. Martin, Pine Bluff, Ark., James Purdom, Richard Purdom, Robert Pitts, Robert Rea, C. E. Reynolds, C. F. Robinson (dead), Cassius Simmons, E. B. Smith (dead), William Smith, William Seymour, R. L. Stobridge (dead), W. B. Saunders, F. E. Samuels, W. K. Sloan, R. B. Stone (dead), J. B. Trulock, Pine Bluff, White Walker, Fayetteville, R. M. Webber.