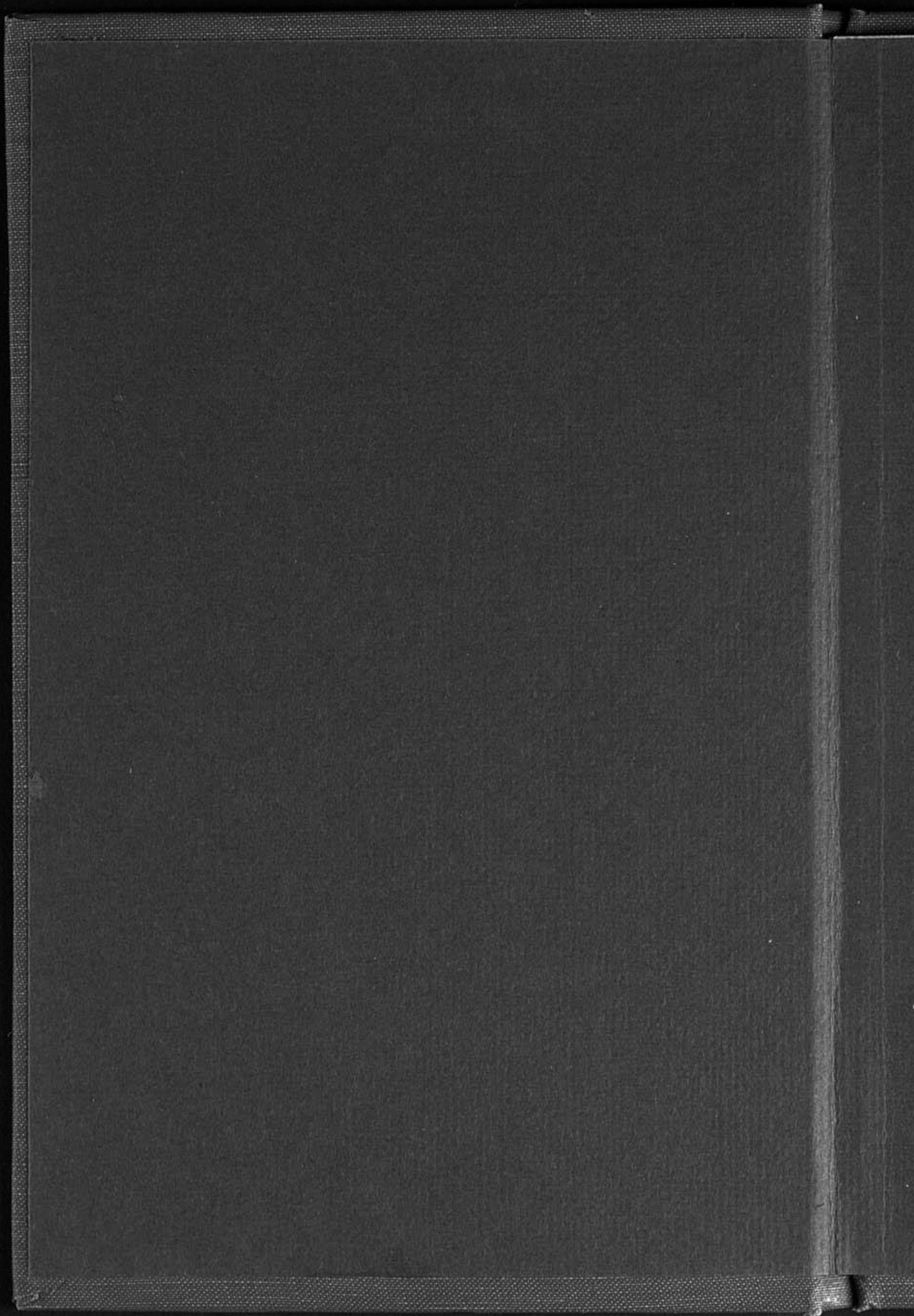
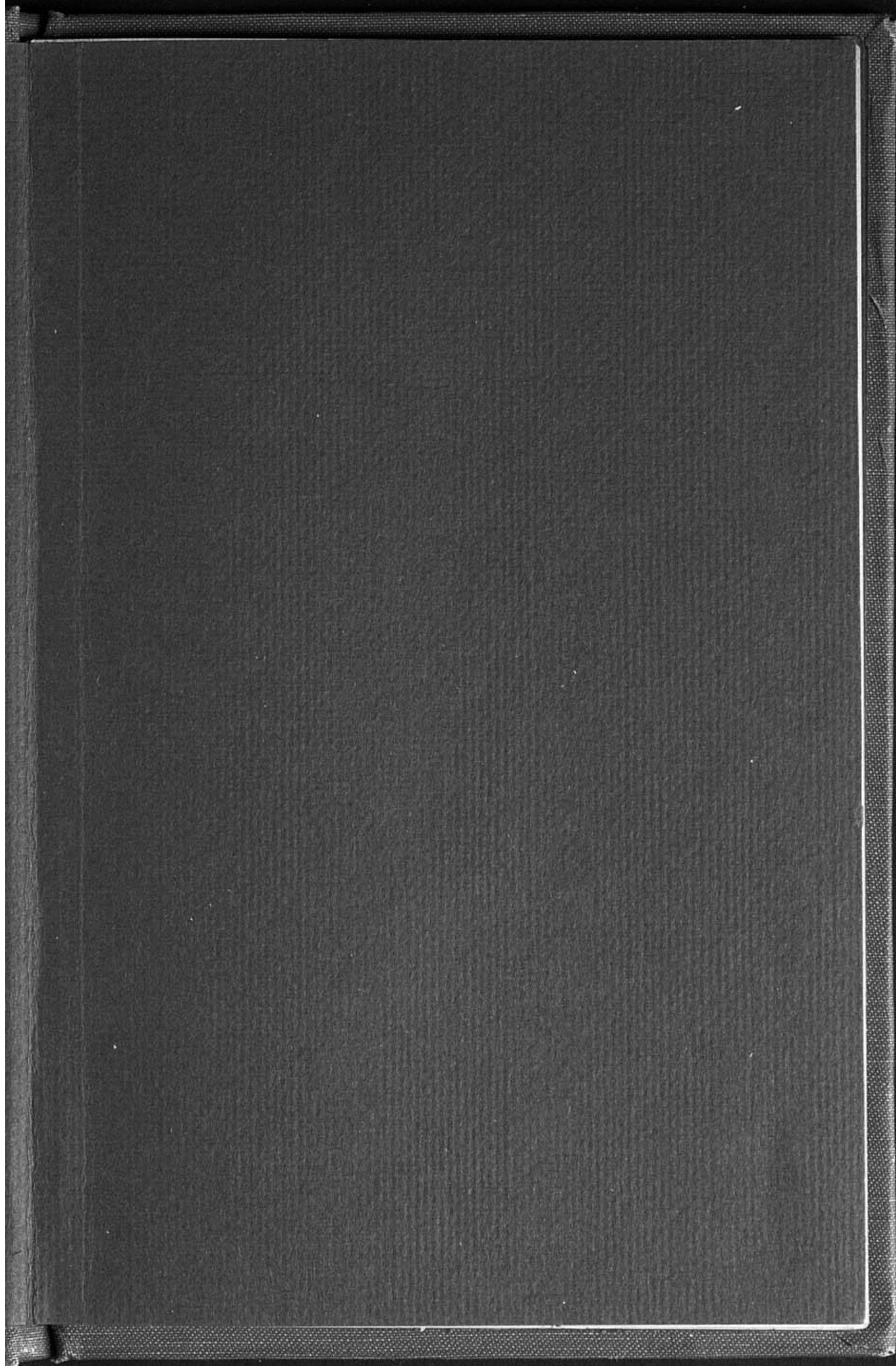


CONSCIENCE AND DEATH

with

WILLIAM F. BROWN







The author, John Calvin De Moss, was the grandfather of T. M. Pearce. This short account of the capture, trial, and execution of a Confederate soldier is one of two graphic personal episodes in the Civil War. [I sent a copy of this to



Sandra Gene

(Pearce) Rankel, the great granddaughter of John Calvin De Moss. This should go to a Kentucky library or archive somewhere. Believe my grandfather

## A SHORT HISTORY

De Moss's wife was named Daisy Dallee. She may have lived in Arkansas before coming to Kentucky. T. M. Pearce, Professor Emeritus, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque,  
SOLDIER-LIFE, New Mexico.

### CAPTURE AND DEATH

...OF...


## WILLIAM FRANCIS CORBIN,

by J. C. De Moss, Oct. 27, 1834-  
1900


Captain Fourth Kentucky Cavalry,

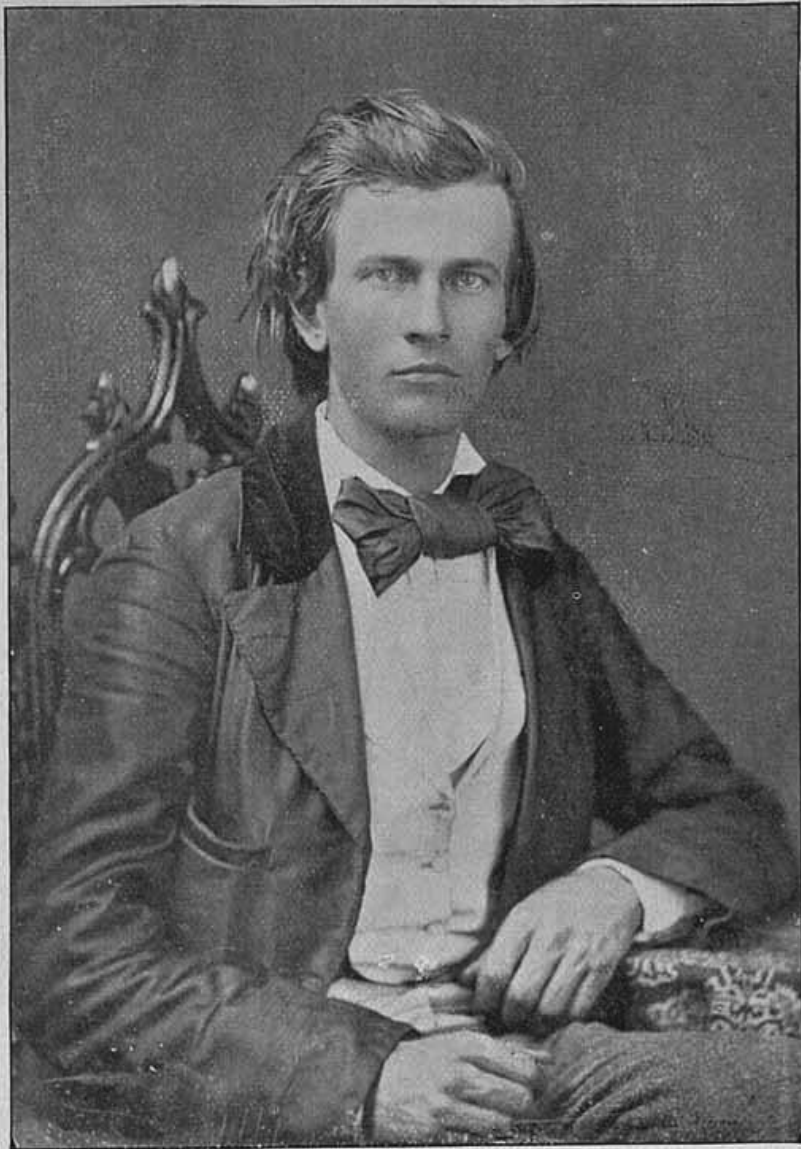
C. S. A.





**T**O REPEOPLE the halls of memory with the forms and voices of our beloved dead, is a sacred duty. We love to remember them as they were in the bloom and beauty of vigorous life, and not as they went down into the gloom and shadow of death; but they went not always down into the gloom and shadow. Often—and it is sweet to remember them so—they mounted into the glorious sunlight of God's eternal love, and then the injustice, cruelty and persecution of men paled before the blazing triumph of eternal goodness. Such was the going away of the subject of this writing. He became a child of light, and dwells in never ending joy. ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀





*William Francis Corbin.*

—\*—  
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J. C. DEMOSS.  
—\*—

X Spec. Coll. 3/82 gift Dr. Joseph A. Bryant & T. M. Rouse





“Whatever my fate,  
I am no changeling — ’tis too late:  
The reed in storms may bow and quiver,  
Then rise again; the tree must shiver.”—*Byron.*

“Tired, he sleeps, and life’s poor play is o’er.”—*Pope.*

NEWPORT, KY., Jan. 15, 1897.

MISS MELISSA CHALFANT CORBIN,  
MIDWAY, KY.:

In compliance with your request, that I assist you in compiling and presenting a brief history of the life and character of your brother, W. F. Corbin, I have decided to furnish you with the following article which I wrote some time since by request, but which was not used as intended at the time, and which, I trust, will serve your purpose. I understand that you desire, more especially, a history of that part of his life coupled with his career as a Confederate soldier, his capture by the Federal army, his trial by court-martial procedure, resulting in his being condemned to be shot on Johnson’s Island, and my connection with the affair. Truly yours,

J. C. DEMOSS.

THE subject of this article, William Francis Corbin, was born on a farm in Campbell County, Kentucky, near the village of Carthage, in the year 1833.

It is not the purpose of the writer of this sketch, to deal with his private or citizen life, so much as with his life as a Confederate soldier; and in order that a better understanding may be had as to the incentives and motives which actuated and

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largely controlled him in casting his lot with the South in the Civil War, I will recite some incidents in his life with which I was connected and familiar, beginning with 1860.

In the summer of that year, I conceived the idea of raising an independent military company, which idea I put into execution soon afterward, by enlisting sixty young men from the eastern part of Campbell County. These were of the best young men, and from some of the oldest families in the county. The company was properly organized, and an election of officers duly held. The writer of this sketch was elected captain, and Wm. F. Corbin, first lieutenant.

A short time after the organization of the company, it was decided to make application to the state authorities at Frankfort, for arms and equipments and to be admitted, under the law, as a company of state guards.

Hon. Beriah Magoffin was governor at the time, and General Simon Bolivar Buckner was commander of the state forces.

This application was granted; and in due time my commission as captain and Corbin's as lieutenant, were received, together with guns and equipments, and the necessary bonds for the use and return of the same to the state when called for, being executed, the company was recognized as a part of the state militia.

The company proceeded to uniform itself in the regulation gray, and after a few months of drilling, made a very presentable appearance, and became a source of pride, not only to the boys themselves, but to the citizens generally.

In order to appreciate this, you must bear in mind, that in those ante-bellum days, military companies were very scarce, and were considered by the people to be very attractive, and hundreds were gathered on drill days, to watch the evolutions in movement and the manual of arms. Thus matters went on for more than a year.

After the war, military companies were not so much of an attraction, and ceased to be paraded simply for display, for the stern realities of war had wrought a wonderful change in the mind of the average citizen, and they preferred to gaze on scenes of a more peaceful nature, less remindful of the awful carnage resulting therefrom.

Sometime during the summer of 1862, my company was called into camp, at Camp Garnett, near Cynthiana, for state drill, where, with other companies of the guards, a week was spent in military instruction.

At this time the state had assumed the attitude of "armed neutrality," *i. e.*, that neither the Union army, nor the Confederate army should occupy her soil as battleground, nor for the purpose of quartering troops within her borders. It is needless to say, at this time, that this position was of short duration, and that it was not respected by either of the contending armies, and when "Uncle Sam" found it necessary to come over and invade the sacred soil of the "Blue Grass" state, he did so without asking permission.

It was during the encampment above referred to, that the chivalric spirit seemed to take hold of Corbin; in fact, it seemed to take possession of almost the entire camp, and there was no disguising the fact that the sympathies of the men were almost unanimously with the Southern cause, as the question of going directly from camp to join the Confederate army, was discussed freely, and several of the companies followed their inclinations.

I prevailed on my company to return and deliver their arms to the state authorities, and thus relieve me of the embarrassment of forfeiting my bond to the state, for the faithful execution of the law.

About this time, General Kirby Smith, of the Confederate army, made his appearance in the northern part of the state, and was approaching Covington and Newport with a formidable force, and to checkmate this movement, the commanding Federal general ordered all available men, both military and civilian, to report for duty, to work in the trenches, and throw up breastworks for the protection of those cities. By this time it became necessary for every one subject to military duty to show his colors, by either obeying this order or by following his convictions to join the Southern cause. Corbin, and about twenty-five other men, chose the latter course, and made their way through the Federal lines to Paris, where on the 25th day of September, 1862, they were regularly sworn in as soldiers in the Confederate army, joining Captain Tom Moore's company, Fourth Kentucky Cavalry.

Corbin was immediately commissioned as captain, but without a command. He spent the winter of 1862-63 with Captain Moore's company, in the mountains of Virginia. During this time but little worthy of note occurred, and early in March, 1863, Captain Corbin was detailed to return to Kentucky to raise a company, and after spending some weeks in Campbell and adjoining counties, and meeting with fairly good success, he started back to join his command with his recruits.

While on his way out, he was captured at the house of a man named Garrett Daniel, near Rouse's Mill, in Pendleton county, on the night of April 8, 1863. There was with him at the time, a comrade, Jefferson McGraw by name, who had formerly lived in Campbell county, and who had come into the state with him. He was also captured. From a reliable source, I understand that the arrangement between Corbin and McGraw was, that they should meet at Daniel's house on the night of the capture, and that Corbin and his recruits arrived on time. After waiting some little while for McGraw, and fearing that something had happened to him, he started his men on, in the direction of Paris, preferring to wait alone. Simultaneous with McGraw's arrival, the soldiers appeared, and surrounding the the house, made the capture. Thus it appears that Captain Corbin, in the kindness of his heart, rather than desert a friend, took the chances of being captured and of suffering the penalty, whatever that might be.

I take the following extract from the Cincinnati *Commercial* of April 13, 1863, "Lieutenant Rickison, of the 118th Ohio Regiment, with a squad of thirteen men, captured Jefferson McGraw and another man, in the neighborhood of Rouse's Mill, on Wednesday evening last (which would be April 8). These men were sent under guard to DeMossville." It also appears from this article, that this squad of soldiers had been sent out from DeMossville, on the K. C. R. R., to reconnoiter the country around Gubser's Mill, with the view of capturing James Caldwell, a Confederate recruiting officer, who was supposed to be in that neighborhood. While on this expedition, by some means unknown to the writer, they got on the track of Corbin and McGraw, and traced them to the Daniel's home.

From the time of the capture until the trial, the interests of the prisoners were in the hands of a number of staunch Union citizens, who were personally acquainted with them, and familiar with all the circumstances attending their war record, arrest and imprisonment. These gentlemen gave the assurance to the family and friends that they would be treated as prisoners of war, and either imprisoned or exchanged, which was all that could be expected and which result was confidently anticipated. These friends were no doubt sincere in their assurances, but when on May 5th it was given out that W. F. Corbin and Jefferson McGraw had been tried by court-martial and sentenced to be shot on Johnson's Island, ten days later, the startling announcement cast a gloom over the entire community, regardless of political or war differences, and the effect can better be imagined than described. The matter had now assumed a more serious aspect, and had been taken out of the realm of speculation and become one of reality.

It was claimed at the time, that Corbin and McGraw were subject to an order issued by General Burnside (then commander of the Union forces with headquarters at Cincinnati), known as Order No. 38.

There was a difference of opinion at the time, among those in position to judge, as to whether this order would apply to the cases of Corbin and McGraw, and this difference still exists, and in order that a more intelligent opinion may be arrived at by the reader, I insert a copy of the order.

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HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE OHIO.

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Cincinnati, O., April 13, 1863.

GENERAL ORDER No. 38.

The Commanding General publishes for the information of all concerned, that hereafter all persons found within our lines who commit acts for the benefit of enemies of our country, will be tried as spies or traitors, and if convicted will suffer death.

This order includes the following class of persons:

Carriers of secret mails.

Writers of letters sent by secret mails.

Secret recruiting officers within our lines.

Persons who have entered into an agreement to pass our lines for the purpose of joining the enemy.

Persons found concealed within our lines belonging to the service of the enemy, and in fact all persons found improperly within our lines who could give information to the enemy.

All persons within our lines who harbor, protect, conceal, feed, clothe or in any way aid the enemies of our country. The habit of declaring sympathy for the enemy will no longer be tolerated in this department; persons committing such offenses will be at once arrested with a view to being tried as above stated, or sent beyond our lines into the lines of their friends.

It must be distinctly understood that treason expressed or implied, will not be tolerated in this department.

All officers and soldiers are strictly charged with the execution of this order.

By command of

Major General A. E. BURNSIDE.

LEWIS RICHMOND, Ass't Adj't General.

Official. D. K. LARNED, Capt. and A. A. G.

It appears from these dates that this order was issued April 13, and the men were captured April 9, four days previous to the date of the order.

It is not the disposition of the writer to criticise at this late day, nor to enter into any discussion on the question of the legality of this order, but he is clearly of the opinion that Corbin and McGraw should have been treated as prisoners of war and subject to exchange or imprisonment, and this opinion is supported by the fact that no other prisoners were executed under this order, although a number had been sentenced. If the order was not abrogated, its enforcement was certainly suspended. After an example had been made of these men and the news had been borne to the Confederacy, I am reliably informed by a gentleman who served as captain in the Confederate army, that a like number of Union prisoners were shot in retaliation and that correspondence was entered into between the two governments, looking to cessation of these acts and to establish the understanding that the war be conducted on a more humane basis, which correspondence, as my informant stated, resulted in accomplishing this end.

As it is the aim of the writer to give the facts connected with the history of the prisoners, so far as he knows, or has been able to ascertain them, rather than to deal in speculative expressions, he has decided to insert the proceedings of the Commission, its findings, and the several orders, under which the prisoners were tried, convicted and executed.

Proceedings of a Military Commission convened at Cincinnati, Ohio,  
April 22, 1863:

Case of WILLIAM F. CORBIN, C. S. A.

Brig. Gen. Potter, President.                      Captain Cutts, Judge Advocate.

GENERAL ORDER 115, A. G. O. 1863.

Judge Advocate General's Office,  
May 4, 1863.

I have examined the within record and find the proceedings regular  
and the proof of the prisoner's guilt complete.

J. Holt, Judge-Advocate General.

Proceedings of a Military Commission convened at Cincinnati, Ohio,  
by virtue of the following order:

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE OHIO.

Cincinnati, Ohio, April 21, 1863.

SPECIAL ORDERS, No. 135.

4. A Military Commission is hereby appointed to meet at Cincinnati,  
Ohio, at 10 o'clock a. m., on Wednesday, the 22nd inst., or as soon there-  
after as practicable, for the trial of such prisoners as may be brought  
before it.

Detail for the Commission:

1. Brig. Gen. R. B. Potter, U. S. Vols.
2. Lieut. Col. E. R. Goodrich, U. S. Vols.
3. Major J. L. Van Buren, A. D. C.
4. Major J. M. Brown, 10th Kentucky Cav.
5. Major R. M. Corwine, A. D. C.
6. Major A. H. Fitch, 115th Ohio Vols.
7. Captain E. Gay, 16th U. S. Infantry.
8. Captain P. M. Leidig, A. D. C.
9. Captain W. H. French, C. S. U. S. Vols.

Captain J. M. Cutts, 11th U. S. Infantry, is appointed Judge Ad-  
vocate.

By order of Major General Burnside,

(Signed) W. P. Anderson,  
Assistant Adjutant General.

FIRST DAY.

Cincinnati, Ohio, Wednesday, April 22, 1863.

The Commission met pursuant to the foregoing order.

Present: Brigadier General R. B. Potter, Lieutenant-Colonel E. R.  
Goodrich, Majors J. L. Van Buren, J. M. Brown, A. H. Fitch, Captains  
P. M. Lydig, W. H. French and the Judge Advocate.

The Commission then proceeded to the trial of William F. Corbin,  
now, or late, of the so-called Confederate army, who, being called into  
court, and having heard the order read, was asked if he had any objection  
to any member named therein, to which he replied in the negative.

The Commission was then duly sworn by the Judge Advocate, and  
the Judge Advocate was sworn by the President in the presence of the  
accused, and William F. Corbin, now, or late, of the so-called Confederate  
army, was arraigned on the following charges and specifications:

CHARGE FIRST.

Recruiting men within the lines of the United States forces, for the so-called Confederate army.

SPECIFICATION.

In this, that the said William F. Corbin, on or about April 9, 1863, was arrested within our lines, near Rouse's Mills, Pendleton county, Kentucky, acting under a recruiting commission from one H. Marshall, a brigadier general of the so-called Confederate States army, empowering him to raise recruits for the said army, the said Corbin being at the time in charge of a number of recruits whom he was seeking to conduct to the said army.

CHARGE SECOND.

Being the carrier of mails, communications and information from within our lines to persons in arms against the government.

SPECIFICATION.

In this, that on or about the 9th day of April, 1863, at or near Rouse's Mills, Pendleton county, Kentucky, the said William F. Corbin, now, or late, of the so-called Confederate army, was arrested engaged in carrying mails and information from within the lines of the United States forces to persons in arms against the government.

To all of which charges and specifications the prisoner pleaded as follows: "Not guilty."

All persons required to give evidence were directed to withdraw and remain in waiting until called for.

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Captain Edgar Sowers, 118th Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry, a witness for the prosecution, being duly sworn, testified as follows:

*J. A. Q.* What is your rank and regiment?

*A.* Captain 118th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

*Q.* Were you present at an examination of the accused made after his arrest?

*A.* I was. I questioned the accused myself on the day of his arrest.

*Q.* Did he state that he was engaged in the Confederate service; how, and in what capacity?

*A.* He said he was a soldier in the rebel army, whether private or officer, he did not state; stated that he had been engaged eight months; he did not particularize as to how he was engaged. He spoke generally.

*Q.* Did he make any statements as to his having been engaged in recruiting for the so-called Confederate army?

*A.* Yes. He stated that he was then, or had been, engaged in recruiting, just previous to his capture—in Campbell county and Pendleton county, but chiefly in Campbell.

*Q.* Did he make any statements relative to his carrying mails or any other information to those in arms against the government?

*A.* He made no statements to me on that subject.

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Lieutenant S. A. Nickerson, 118th Ohio Volunteer Infantry, a witness for the prosecution, being duly sworn, testified as follows:

*J. A. Q.* What is your rank and regiment?

*A.* Second lieutenant, 118th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.

*Q.* Were you in command of the detachment which arrested the accused?

*A.* Yes.



Q. State where and when the arrest was made?

A. It was in the edge of Pendleton county, Kentucky, on what is called the "Washington Trace," on the morning of the 9th of April, near Ellis Cross Roads and also near Rouse's Mills, between two and three o'clock in the morning.

Q. What was the accused then doing, and who were with him?

A. He was then by himself. He had left the main road and was in a house, or had been. When he saw the squad coming up he left the house and started away. I sent some three or four men around the rear who arrested him. He was armed with a Colt's revolver and a large butcher's knife something like a corn cutter.

Q. Did he make any statements as to his character or business?

A. Not to me. When he was brought up to two other prisoners whom I had arrested, he recognized them. Corbin made an effort to shake hands with one of them, who said, "He guessed not, as his hands were tied."

Q. Were any papers found in his possession?

A. The only paper I found in his possession was a commission from one Humphrey Marshall, and also a blank book with a blank form of oath in it, and a list—supposed to be a list of recruits. His name, W. F. Corbin, Recruiting Sergeant, was signed in the book, at the close of the blank oath and signed W. F. Corbin, in another place.

The Judge Advocate showed the commission referred to, to the witness and appended to this record, marked "A."

Q. Do you recognize this paper as the commission you referred to?

A. Yes. I recognize it as the paper itself. It is what I understand to be a recruiting commission, authorizing election of officers when a certain number of men were recruited.

No cross-examination.

Private F. M. Stockdale, Company I, 118th Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry, being duly sworn, testified as follows:

J. A. Q. What is your name, rank and regiment?

A. F. M. Stockdale, private, Company I, 118th Ohio Volunteers.

Q. Were you present when the accused was arrested?

A. Yes.

Q. Who were with him, and in what business was he then engaged?

A. He was by himself, when we got him, at a house. He started away when we came on to him. I suppose he was recruiting. He said so in my presence and in that of Orderly Campbell who was along. He had no recruits with him at the time. I suppose he was just gathering them up.

Q. Have you any reason to believe there were other men in the neighborhood?

A. Yes. Because we caught more besides him. Those who were caught said there were more. That if they had been all together, they would have given us a pretty tight rub. I told them I wished they had been all together.

Q. Was there any fight or skirmish with any body of men in that neighborhood soon afterwards?

A. Yes. The next day. There were about twelve or thirteen, one of whom was killed, two others wounded, who got off; none captured.

Q. Did the accused make any statement to you relative to his carrying mails or other information?

A. No, I don't think he did.

Q. Do you know whether he did carry such mails?

A. I suppose he did. He had some letters; he put them in the fire; I saw him; there were two or three. This was in the morning, about breakfast time; it was after daylight.

Cross-examined by the accused.

*Prisoner Q.* Was it me, or some of the other men who made the remark "that if we had been together, we could have whipped you?"

*A.* I think it was you and McGraw, both together, who made the remark. I won't say positively which one.

Sergeant Penlo, Company B, 118th Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry, being duly sworn, testified as follows:

*J. A. Q.* What is your rank and regiment?

*A.* Sergeant, Company B, 118th Ohio Volunteers.

*Q.* Were you present when the accused was arrested?

*A.* I was not. I was not present until he was brought to headquarters to the provost marshal's office, at Cynthiana, Ky.

*Q.* Did you hear him make any admissions relative to the business in which he had been engaged?

*A.* He said he had been recruiting for the rebel army, and it was the fifth or sixth trip he had made into the state. He said he had been very successful. He said they had something like twenty and they would not catch the others—they were too far gone; that they, meaning the United States troops, had only caught three.

*Q.* In conversation, did he make any statement showing his character as one engaged in arms against the government? (The Judge Advocate stated that he offered this question to show that the accused was a rebel emissary.)

*A.* He said he had been through the state before, and was one of the men that helped to burn the bridges on the Kentucky Central Railroad. He also said he had had a chance to burn the bridge at Berry Station "and was d—d sorry he had not done it."

Cross-examination.

*Prisoner Q.* Did I say that I had made five or six trips into Kentucky?

*A.* You did.

*Q.* Did I say that I helped to burn the bridges on the Kentucky Central Railroad?

*A.* You did.

*Q.* Did I say "I was d—d sorry I had not burned the bridge at Berry Station?"

*A.* Yes, or words to that effect.

The accused having no defense or statements to make, the Commission cleared for deliberation.

The Commission having maturely weighed and considered the evidence adduced, find the accused, William F. Corbin, of the so-called Confederate army, as follows:

Of the Specification, First Charge: "Guilty."

Of the First Charge: "Guilty."

Of the Specification, Second Charge: "Guilty."

Of the Second Charge: "Guilty."

And the Commission do therefore sentence him, the said William F. Corbin, now, or late, of the so-called Confederate army,

"To be shot unto death, at such time and place as the Commanding General shall direct."

Two-thirds of the members of the Commission concurring in the sentence.

J. M. Cutts,  
Captain 11th Infantry,  
Judge Advocate.

Robert B. Potter,  
Brigadier General Volunteers,  
President.

The proceedings, finding and sentence in the foregoing case are approved and confirmed. The prisoner, William F. Corbin, now, or late, of the so-called Confederate army, will be sent in irons by the proper officer and delivered into the custody of the commanding officer on Johnson's Island, depot of prisoners of war, near Sandusky, Ohio.

The commanding officer at that post will see that the sentence is duly executed at that post, between the hours of 12 o'clock noon and 3 o'clock p. m., of Friday, May 15, 1863. Subject to the approval of the President of the United States.

A. E. Burnside, Major General.

The foregoing sentence approved:  
May 4, 1863.

A. Lincoln.

"A."

By virtue of authority vested in me by the Confederate States of America, I authorize William F. Corbin to raise and muster into the service of the Confederate States, for my command, a company of mounted men, or a less number, to be attached to the Fourth Kentucky Cavalry, commanded by Col. Henry L. Giltner. When such company numbers fifty-four, rank and file, it may organize by the election of officers and afterwards be expanded to one hundred, rank and file.

When the muster roll of said company, properly signed and certified, is presented to me, I will cause the sum of fifty dollars (\$50) to be paid to each man as bounty money.

Over the signature of each man must appear a certificate that he is free from any disease of a constitutional character and enters the service of the Confederate States for three years, or during the war. When this muster roll, properly signed and certified, is returned to the office of my adjutant general, the officers and men of the new company will be recognized, and not till then.

Signed,

H. Marshall, Br. Gen. P. A. C. S.

Official. Guerrant, A. A. G.

[Wm. F. Corbin's Authority.]

McGraw's trial resulted in his being sentenced to death with Corbin.

When the startling result of this court-martial became known to his friends, steps were taken to bring an influence to bear on General Burnside, as well as on President Lincoln, to have this sentence commuted from the death penalty to imprisonment for life, or a shorter term, as might be most agreeable to them. All who knew Captain Corbin, knew him only to love and respect him, however much they may have differed on the questions involved in the war. They knew him to be a brave, noble, and generous young man, enjoying a reputation for good morals and good citizenship equal to the best. As evidence of his correct life, I give an extract from an interview with Geo. R. Rule, master commissioner of Pendleton county, Kentucky, who was a messmate of W. F. Corbin while in the

army. Mr. Rule said: "Will Corbin's camp life was not different from his home life. He was always a Christian gentleman." Everybody was his friend, and no wonder when they heard this report they were startled beyond measure, and continually asked the question, "Is it an offense punishable by death?"

After a hurried consultation of the family and friends, it was decided that Miss Melissa Corbin, sister of Captain Corbin, should go to Cincinnati and appear before General Burnside and make a personal plea, such as only a sister can make to save the life of a beloved brother.

Miss Corbin, accompanied by the writer, on arrival in Cincinnati, called on the Hon. R. M. Bishop, ex-mayor of the city, and explained her mission. Mr. Bishop informed her that he had already become familiar with her brother's trouble, and had been interesting himself in his behalf, but so far without avail, and that he intended to continue his best efforts, which he proceeded to do at once, by going with her to Mr. Nicholas Patterson, a man of wealth, prominent as a business man, President of the "Union League" of that city, and probably wielding a greater influence with the Union element than any man in the city.

Mr. Patterson became at once interested in her cause and gave every assurance of his hearty co-operation in the accomplishment of her purpose.

This article would not be complete without associating the name of Mr. James G. Kercheval with it. Mr. Kercheval, a life-long friend of the Corbin family, and at whose hospitable home in Cincinnati Miss Corbin was entertained while in the city, interested himself in behalf of the prisoners by making daily visits to them while in prison, and supplying them with extra dishes prepared by the hands of his estimable wife.

Although differing from them politically, yet the sympathies of Mr. and Mrs. Kercheval knew no bounds, and they manifested this sympathy to a good degree in their efforts to comfort and console the men in their distress. This was liable to bring upon them harsh criticisms, if nothing more serious, from the more ultra-Union element, then at fever-heat around headquarters. They had known William Corbin from his youth, and in the language of Mrs. Kercheval, as expressed in a recent conversa-

tion when speaking of him, "I never knew a truer or nobler Christian than he was," and while speaking, though more than a third of a century had passed into the "shadows of the by-gone," her eyes were dimmed with bitter tears excited by memories from which she could not be divorced. The noble heart of that grand woman beats to-day with earnest sympathy for the remaining few of the Corbin family. I have no language at my command to fully express the praise due these devoted friends.

Dr. A. S. Dameron and Will Corbin were friends in their youth and young manhood, having been reared neighbors. When the war came on they drifted apart politically, but lost none of their respect for each other on account of this difference, and when Gus Dameron, as we called him then, heard of his friend's trouble, he was among the first to hunt him up and offer his best services to help him out of his dilemma, and if success did not crown his efforts, it was no fault of his.

As has already been said, the trial was over, and sentence passed. Miss Corbin was in the city awaiting advice of friends as to what she should do. It was decided that she should make a personal appeal to General Burnside, in behalf of her brother, and that Messrs. Bishop and Patterson, Elder R. Graham, then pastor of the Central Christian Church, and Dr. A. S. Dameron, should accompany her and give their influence and hearty support; which decision was promptly carried into effect. They bore with them a petition signed by numerous leading Union citizens acquainted with the prisoners, addressed to the President, urging him to exercise clemency toward them. This petition was presented to the General by Mr. Graham, in a masterly and heart-moving speech, to which General Burnside gave earnest attention.

Miss Corbin also pleaded for the life of her brother, not only with a pathos and deep feeling prompted and inspired by the dreadful weight of sorrow pressing upon her in view of the impending fate of her brother, but with an intelligence that few women possess, and which should have melted the stoutest heart; but all these appeals were in vain. The General's only reply was that he had determined to make an example of these men and that the matter was out of his hands, and only the

President had the power to give the relief asked for. In answer to the question, "would he recommend to the President that the sentence be commuted to life imprisonment," he said that he would not make any recommendations, "but would forward the petition to the President, without recommendation." Thus ended the interview, and Miss Corbin left with a heavy heart and with but little hope of accomplishing anything. Yet, unwilling to give up while a spark of hope remained, she obtained strong letters of endorsement to the President and other prominent men in Washington, from Mr. Bishop, Mr. Patterson, Elder Robert Graham, and some other influential Union men, giving urgent reasons that he give her a hearing, and, armed with these letters, she was advised to go to Washington and make a personal appeal to the President in behalf of her brother, which advice she proceeded to act upon at once. It was urged also by her friends that I accompany her as escort, which I consented to do.

An incident occurred on our trip which, while not being directly connected with this history, may be of some interest. When our train arrived at Harper's Ferry, several hundred soldiers boarded it, bound for Washington, and soon after leaving the station they became very boisterous and acted like drunken men. They discharged their guns through the windows of the coach, cursing, fighting, and using vulgar language.

Miss Corbin, being the only lady passenger in the coach, this conduct of the soldiers made it exceedingly embarrassing for her, and caused me to feel some anxiety for her safety. When these riotous demonstrations were at their height, I called the conductor's attention to the fact that the lady was entitled to better protection. He replied that he was powerless to control the soldiers. Just at this moment a young man, apparently about twenty-five years of age, beardless, of fair complexion, with a keen dark eye, stepped into the coach, and after looking around a moment and observing the lady, he ordered four of the men sitting nearest us, to be more quiet. They immediately turned on him, and I really feared that his life was in danger, as they seemed very much enraged at his interference with their affairs. Just as they were about to lay hands on

him, he threw back the breast of his coat and a silver star flashed from its concealment. If a flash of lightning from a cloudless sky, accompanied by a bolt of steel, had penetrated that car, the effect could not have been more startling.

The men who but a moment before seemed little less than a howling mob of desperadoes, were to all appearances struck dumb, and death-like stillness reigned instead. What power this young man had to produce this effect, puzzled me. I ventured to invite him to share my seat, which he did. I engaged him in conversation with the view of finding out something of his history. He informed me that he was connected with the Army of Tennessee. I do not remember in just what particular capacity, or what his official title was, but he gave me to understand that he was the bearer of important messages from the commander of his army, to headquarters at Washington; said his name was Ben Abrams, of Clermont county, Ohio. He was familiar with the President, and all the leading generals located in and about Washington. We explained our mission and he became very much interested and offered many valuable suggestions to aid us in attaining our purpose.

During the remainder of our trip Miss Corbin spent the time talking to Abrams about her brother; giving his life and connection with Confederacy, his capture, summary trial and sentence to death, and the feeling of uncertainty she entertained in accomplishing anything with the President; to all of which he listened with the deepest interest and expressed feelings of warm sympathy, such expressions as could only emanate from a brave and generous heart. He said, "I should be so happy to help you, happy as the hope of heaven could make me."

Our journey ended we bade our friend good-bye, with the understanding that he would see us the next day and let us know if he could bring any influence to bear in Miss Corbin's behalf. According to appointment he met us and said that the man (giving his name) who could accomplish more than any other, could not be reached within the limited time of our stay in Washington, and thus another disappointment was recorded. But the warm attachment formed for Ben Abrams, by both Miss Corbin and myself, will remain a pleasant memory while life shall last.

On arrival at Washington, one Dr. Bangs, to whom she had a letter from Elder Graham, strongly endorsing and commending her, together with her mission, to his most kindly and earnest consideration, on reading the letter, opened his house as well as his heart and gave her a most cordial and hearty welcome to his home, introducing her to his wife and family. They at once demanded that she make their house her home while in Washington, and she, feeling that she had found friends indeed, in a strange city, readily yielded to their demands.

Miss Corbin had also letters to U. S. Marshal Lammon, of the District of Columbia, urging his kindly offices in her interest. It was at Dr. Bangs' home that she was introduced to the marshal. He read her letters, listened to her story, and expressed himself in full sympathy with her and manifested his sincerity by planning for an interview between her and the President. He attempted to put this plan into execution by accompanying her to the White House. (It might be well to say that Marshal Lammon stood closer to the President than any man in Washington.) He soon gained an audience with the President, explained Miss Corbin's mission and presented her cause in the strongest possible language. The President replied that he could not see her, that these appeals were so numerous that it became necessary for him to make it a rule for all such matters to come to him by petition.

While Marshal Lammon failed to accomplish what he started out to do, yet he did not leave her without hope, and suggested that she write a statement of her brother's connection with the Confederacy, his character, capture, trial, and sentence, and make a sister's appeal that his life be spared, and in the meantime he would try to see the President again.

Miss Corbin acted on this advice and, in the privacy of her room, wrote a letter to the President, which, if it had been read by him, might have changed the current of his thoughts. This letter was handed to Dr. Sunderland, a minister of the leading Presbyterian church in the city, and to whom she had a letter of introduction, with the request that he present it to the President the following day. Dr. Sunderland occupied the pulpit of the church which the President attended, and consequently had easy access to his presence. At the appointed time he pro-



ceeded to call on the President, and meeting him on one of the approaches to the White House, stopped him and presented the letter, explaining its contents, at the same time requesting him to read and consider it favorably, if he could consistently do so. The President stated in my hearing, to the Doctor, that "he must decline to read the letter; that these men were bridge-burners and bad men and should be punished, and that he could not interfere with General Burnside's order." It was evident from the President's remarks, that his mind had been strongly influenced against the prisoners, by the testimony of one witness at the trial, who testified concerning the connection of the accused with certain bridge-burning. Subsequent investigation proved, beyond a doubt, that Corbin was not in the neighborhood of the locality where the bridge was burned, at the time of the burning, and so far as I have been able to ascertain, by careful investigation, he had not fired a gun, nor committed any overt act against the United States government, other than enlisting in the Confederate army and returning within the Federal lines for the purpose of recruiting. In addition to this, when we consider his spotless Christian character and pure morality, it is impossible to believe that he made use of the language attributed to him by the witness, and if such statement were made, it must have been by another, and evidently the witness was mistaken as to the person who made the alleged statement. Be this as it may, the President was firm in his position, and finding that nothing more could be accomplished, Miss Corbin returned to Cincinnati.

It may seem strange to the reader who did not live during these stirring times of civil war, that such appeals and influences could not accomplish some favorable results, but in explanation of this we can only recall the circumstances then existing. The fate of the nation was hanging in the balance; the victorious army of the Confederacy was hovering round the capital, and its cannons were thundering at the gates. The President, filling the dual position of chief executive and commander-in-chief of the army, must have been almost overwhelmed by the responsibility resting upon him. The life of the republic, as well as the lives of great armies, were largely in his keeping, and these duties far outweighed, in his estimation, any appeal of the

individual, however meritorious. While these reasons may not satisfy our earnest desire for a recognition of our cause, yet, in our calmer moments, will be considered as a palliation, if not justification, for the deed.

On arrival at Cincinnati, and reporting the result of her interview with the President to Messrs. Bishop and Patterson, Graham and Kercheval, also to General Burnside, it was decided that I proceed at once to Johnson's Island. As the day set for the execution was but two days off, it was necessary to go on the first train. General Burnside gave me a permit to bring the bodies home after the execution, also a letter to the commanding officer, to extend to me the privileges of the island and to show me every courtesy.

I arrived at the island on the day before the execution and presented my passport and letter to Major Peirson, commanding officer, who at once ordered a guard to show me the cell where Corbin and McGraw were confined. The prison was a common soldiers' canvas tent; the furnishings consisted of straw and blankets for a bed, and camp stools to sit on. The men were chained to a ball which would weigh about twenty pounds, the chain being riveted around one ankle. The guard remained during the interview between the prisoners and myself, which, of course, prevented that freedom of speech which otherwise might have been indulged in.

I explained to Corbin the efforts that had been made in his behalf; told him of the pleadings of his sister before General Burnside; of her trip to Washington to see the President, and her treatment at his hands; of all the influences that had been brought to bear on the powers that be, and how they had all come to naught. Nothing but failure had marked every effort, and the only shadow of hope remaining was that the President might delay the execution, or might show clemency in some degree. But I gave him no assurance.

He said he was not disappointed, that he felt from the hurried manner in which the court-martial was conducted, that he was to be made an example of, and that he was resigned to his fate. After about a half an hour of conversation I left them, with the understanding that I would see them again the next morning. I returned to Sandusky for the night and went over to

the island early the next morning. I called on the major and had quite an extended talk with him, explaining the history of the prisoners, the circumstances of their capture, etc. He said that "their behavior while there had completely won his respect and sympathy, that there were political prisoners there, under short sentences, whom he would rather see shot than these men, and that he still hoped to hear from Washington some word relieving him of the unpleasant duty before him."

He said that he would not execute the order until the last moment. The earnestness manifested in his kindly expressions, satisfied me that he was sincere in all he said. Continuing, he said that there would be two firing squads of twelve men each, one empty gun in each squad—this simply that each soldier might feel that he held that gun; each gun was to be loaded with twelve buckshot and one minnie ball. He said that the soldiers had all formed a friendship for the prisoners and their sympathies were strongly with them, and he feared that they might aim to miss, rather than kill, but that he had instructed the soldiers to take deadly aim at the heart. He did this as a matter of mercy to the prisoners, for if they only wounded them it would be merely to reload and fire again, thus continuing the torture of the men, and besides, any of them found shrinking from duty, would be punished.

There was a small chapel standing at the northern extremity of the court, where the prisoners were permitted to meet and engage in religious worship, one hour every day, at ten o'clock. On this day a number of prisoners, among them Corbin and McGraw, assembled in the chapel. There were also present several officers and their wives. The service was led by Captain Corbin. It consisted of Scripture reading, short talks, singing and prayers. Many of those present took part, but the leader occupied most of the time. He had been accustomed to do this before he joined the army, he being an elder in the Christian church at California, a little town in his native county.

That scene, and the words which fell from his lips on that occasion, are indelibly stamped on my memory. Although more than thirty-four years have passed since then, yet, as I write these words, all the scenes enacted on that eventful day, are as fresh in my mind as though they had occurred but yesterday.

After reading and prayer by Captain Corbin, he said, in part, speaking of himself, that "life was just as sweet to him as any man, but if necessary for him to die in order to vindicate the law of the country, he was ready to die, he did not fear death; he had done nothing he was ashamed of; he had acted on his own convictions and was not sorry for what he had done; he was fighting for a principle, which in the sight of God and man, and in the view of death which awaited him, he believed was right, and feeling this he had nothing to fear in the future." He closed his talk by expressing his faith in the promises of Christ and his religion.

To see this man, standing in the presence of an audience composed of officers, privates, and prisoners of all grades, chained to and bearing his ball, and bearing it alone, presenting the religion of Christ to others while exemplifying it himself, was a scene which would melt the strongest heart, and when he took his seat every heart in that audience was softened and every eye bathed in tears. After the service the Major asked me to dine with him, which invitation I accepted.

While the meal was sumptuous, and the service elegant, but little of the food was consumed. The host and hostess, as well as the guest, were too full of solemn thoughts suggested by the events of the day. Mrs. Pierson was so much affected by the thoughts of the scene soon to be enacted, that she seemed to be overcome with sorrowful emotions. She said that Mr. Corbin's conduct since he had been there, had been such as to win her full sympathy and respect, and she could not bear the thought of his being shot and prayed that he might yet be spared so sad a fate.

Dinner over, I went to make my last call on Corbin and McGraw. During this interview, Corbin sent messages of love to his mother, brothers, sister and friends in Kentucky, requesting that they be reconciled and bear up under the weight of sorrow, with Christian fortitude and courage. He handed me a well-worn pair of gloves, saying, "This is all I have to give. Take them to remember me by." McGraw gave me the same charges to be delivered to his old mother and friends and handed me a handkerchief, with the request that I keep it in remembrance of him. The interview ended, I bade them a last good-by and left them to their own silent meditations.

I have in my possession a letter written by Elder Robert Graham, of the Christian church, under date of May 13, to W. F. Corbin, then prisoner on Johnson's Island, two days before the execution; also two letters from W. F. Corbin, one bearing date May 11, four days before his death, and one bearing date May 14, one day before his death, both written on Johnson's Island, addressed to his mother, brother, and sister; also a letter from Miss Melissa Corbin, to her friend, Mrs. Kercheval, of date May 18, three days after her brother's death, and one day after his burial.

These letters so well and beautifully express the emotions and experiences, not only of the author, but of many of the relations and friends then living, and some are yet living, whose feelings will respond to these sentiments, that I think it will be no breach of confidence to insert them here as written, believing as he does, that they will be read with more than passing interest, by the friends.

Cincinnati, O., May 13, 1863.

MR. W. F. CORBIN.

*Dear and Afflicted Brother:*

At the request of your sorrowing sister, and moved by my interest in you, I seat myself this morning to commune with you, in all probability for the last time on this earth. It is with deep sympathy in your affliction and that of your dear mother and sister, that I endeavor to do this. To contemplate death at any time is solemn, and well calculated to awe the human soul; but in a case like this, we feel all our pity awakened and our sympathy called forth. I would I had the power to describe the feelings of your family and friends, in view of the approaching end.

I am charged by your sister to assure you that neither she nor your mother can attach ignominy to your memory; though you die a violent death, and are so required by the laws of the country, they can make allowance for influences under which you acted with others, who know you not, can not make. She requested me to inform you what efforts had been made by her and your friends to obtain a reprieve or commutation of your penalty. Your sister and Mr. DeMoss got here on the day you were removed from this city. I had an interview with them and related the substance of our interview. I can assure you, it gives us all pleasure to know that in this sore affliction you enjoy the comforts and consolations of our holy religion. I told your sister the substance of what you said to me during our interview; it was a cordial to her wounded spirit to be assured you would meet your end prepared for the solemn change, and in blessed hope that, through the mercy of God in Christ, you will attain the crown of eternal life.

Mr. Patterson, who saw you during your confinement here; Brother Bishop, formerly mayor of this city, Mr. DeMoss, your devoted friend, and myself, had an interview with General Burnside, and presented a petition in your behalf, signed by some of the most influential citizens of your county. The General treated us very kindly and heard all we had to say.

He assured us it would be one of the happiest acts of his life to recommend you and Brother McGraw to the clemency of the President, if he could do so consistently with his views of duty in the responsible position he now fills. We were all deeply impressed with General Burnside's goodness of heart and his sincerity. He kindly offered to send the petition to the President. We had a copy made and gave the original to General Burnside, to be sent on to Washington. Mr. DeMoss and your sister went on immediately to Washington and used all their power and the influence of friends, enlisted in your behalf, to get the President to commute your sentence. They returned day before yesterday, and yesterday morning your sister had an interview with General Burnside, who has given your sister and your friends permission to see you before Friday. Before this reaches you, some of your friends will have seen you and told you all. I will only add, while on this point, that all praise is due to your devoted friend, Mr. DeMoss, for his untiring labors for your pardon; had you been his own brother, he could not have done more. I need not say that your sister has done all that a devoted sister could do for you. Let these reflections cheer you in this dark hour; your grave shall be wet with tears, and fervent prayers shall go up to our God in heaven that your faith fail not.

And now, my dear brother, let me point you to the "Lamb of God," who alone can pardon your sins and sustain you in death. Betrayed in an evil hour, and I would fain hope without reflection, into hostility, to the government of our fathers, I devoutly pray that, having seen your error, and made full confession to your God, and with a conscience at peace with your Maker and fellow-men, you are now prepared to bid farewell to the shadows of earth, to enter upon the glorious realities of the future world. Read this letter to Brother McGraw. Though written to you, it is to him also. Farewell, brethren, may the God of all mercy and grace, who alone can know our hearts, and before whom we all shall soon appear, comfort, console, and support you, and at last receive you both to the world of life and peace, where the redeemed of the Lord shall dwell secure forever. We cease not to pray for you, and oh, my brethren, cast all your care on Jesus. Again, farewell! in tears, but in hope and love. Farewell!

ROBERT GRAHAM.

[From *W. F. Corbin.*]

May 11, 1863.

*Dear Mother, Brother, and Sister:*

I write this to let you know how I am. I am well, but have given up nearly all hope of being pardoned. I trust in God that he, through Jesus Christ, will save me in His kingdom. I have been made to rejoice in His name even in prison. O Mother! If I could live for your sake, and to serve my Savior, how happy I would be; but we must all die, and I am resigned. Let us put our trust in God, and we will soon meet where there is no more parting, no more sorrow. God being my helper, I will meet you all in heaven. Sorrow not as those who have no hope; we will meet again. We pray and sing day and night.

My dear brother, *serve God*. Let the world go, and prepare for heaven; put your trust in Him, and He will save you.

Dear sister, continue in the Lord. Sorrow not for me; God is with me. Meet me in heaven. Give my love to the children and all my friends. Remember me to Gus. Dameron for his kindness to me. May God bless him, and may he bless and keep you all, is the prayer of your loving son and brother. Farewell! till we meet in heaven.

W. F. CORBIN.

May 14, 1863.

To my Dear Mother, Brother, and Sister:

This is the last writing I ever expect to do in the world; therefore I address it to you all. I know you are all praying for me, but when you get this I will be no more. I hope to be with the blessed; with my dear brother, and all who have gone before. Oh! do not weep for me. O Ma, we will meet in heaven, where we will sorrow no more. God will in nowise cast off those who put their trust in Him. I have thrown myself upon His mercy and have prayed Him, through Jesus Christ, to forgive all my sins. "A contrite spirit and broken heart He will in nowise cast off." He has been very precious to me in my lonely hours; He will be more precious to me in heaven. Oh! may you all continue faithful, and may God grant we may meet in heaven, where there will be no more wars, no more crying, sighing, sorrows nor fears, but where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Give my dying love to all and, oh, tell them to meet me in my Father's house, where there are many mansions prepared for us. Oh! may God bless you all and at last *save us all* in His kingdom, is the prayer of your ever loving son and brother,  
WILL.

[From Miss Corbin to Mrs. Kercheval.]

California, Kentucky.

My Dear Mrs. Kercheval:

We have lain him to rest. No longer do dungeon walls enclose him, nor cold chains fetter his body. His tried spirit has quit its clay dwelling and gone, I humbly trust, to the haven of rest. Oh! Eternal rest, eternal life! May God have called him as a wanderer home.

With a strength which I did not think I could possess, I have borne this blow. Surely, I received it from heaven; don't you think so? I have realized more fully than ever before, that peace of God, which passeth all understanding. Your comforting words I shall never forget; through them I have greatly strengthened my dear mother. We are at our old home; we thought we would feel better to spend the summer here, than at any other place. Every blade of grass, bush and leaf, speak to her of her buried loved ones, and of bygone happiness. She lives in the past. I feel that I have undertaken a great deal. I know not what the summer has in store for me, but I trust the Lord will give me strength according to my day and trial. Ah me! what a desolation around; what a fearful looking for the evil to come. O righteous Father! keep us in thy arms; hide us beneath the shadow of thy wing while the fearful storm is passing. We have lain him beside the gentle boy, who scarce ten months ago, fell sweetly asleep in Jesus. How hard to realize that those love-lit eyes are closed forever in death; that his sweet "My Sister," will never fall upon my ears again. How strange that 'mid all the flush of beauty that envelopes earth, only man will be miserable; man, for whom all this beauty was created.

Dear Brother Graham! What words of comfort has he spoken to me. Thank him for me and tell him that I much regret not having seen him on board steamer *Magnolia*. I remained in the parlor some time, thinking perhaps he would come, yet not much expecting that he would walk so far, till, heart-sick, I sought my own chamber. Oh! that lonely ride, with not one friend to speak a word of comfort. In vain did I search each face for one look of sympathy, and at last reached home to meet, in silence, my mother's anxious, inquiring looks. Oh! nothing but the mercy of God could enable us to bear this burden.

I would write a note to Brother Graham, but cannot now. Have just received the paper containing his letter to Will.

I am now surrounded with kind, sympathizing friends, but how lonely will I feel when they have to leave us. I hope you will all continue to write when you can; that will always be a bright day that brings a love-laden missive from brethren and sisters in Christ.

With this I send you a copy of Will's letters. Write soon, and with love to you all, believe me your faithful friend and sister.

May 18.

LICCIE CORBIN.

Two hours after our interview, Will Corbin and Jeff McGraw, as we familiarly called them, marched out of their cell, bearing their own ball and chains, each surrounded by a squad of twelve soldiers, to the shore of the island, where the blue waters of Sandusky Bay washed the green sward on the shore—a place suggestive of more pleasant scenes.

The men were blindfolded, hands tied behind them, and seated on their coffins, facing the firing party standing twelve paces away. Before leaving them in the cell, they requested me to stay with them until the last, which I promised to do.

Standing about one hundred feet from them, I could distinctly hear the command, "one, two, three! fire!" and the deed was done. Corbin and McGraw had paid the penalty, with their lives, for deeds which they conscientiously believed to be performed for the right.

The strain was so intense on the nerves of the firing party, that one of them, hearing the last word of command, fainted, and had to be carried from the scene.

When the writer pauses and recalls the awful memories of that scene, he does not wonder that this man fainted. Neither tongue nor pen can describe the feelings of one witnessing his lifelong friends shot to death, and far less, under the existing circumstances.

Corbin and McGraw appeared to be less nervous than the writer or any of the other spectators. Seated on the heads of their coffins, erect and steady, not a murmur was heard, nor muscle moved. I do not think they suffered. Death was instantaneous, and they fell back as gently as though assisted by some loving hand.

The execution took place May 15, 1863. Afterward the bodies were properly cared for by the soldiers detailed for that purpose, placed in coffins, and forwarded by express, to their homes in Kentucky, the government furnishing transportation.



On my way home it was necessary to report to General Burnside, at Cincinnati, to secure transportation to California. I called on Mr. Patterson, who accompanied me. At this interview some strong language was indulged in between the General and Mr. Patterson. I remember that Mr. Patterson said, among other things, "General Burnside, these men were murdered!" The General replied, "Mr. Patterson, that is *your* opinion." I mention this to show the intense interest felt by Mr. Patterson for the dead soldiers, and sympathy for their friends.

Alas! how different were the scenes at the Corbin home now, from those of one short year before, when, in the full vigor of young manhood, and flushed with visions of military achievements and fame to be won on the fields of battle, he bade his old mother, his brother and sister, good-bye. Now the same form was before them, cold in death.

On arrival at his old home, and considering the strained relations between some of the citizens, it was not thought advisable to hold regular funeral services, but it was decided to send for old Uncle George Fisher, as he was familiarly called, he being one of the pioneers of the Christian reformation, a man full of faith, noted for his purity and godly walk, to conduct a short prayer and song service. This was accordingly done, and the last sad rites over the remains of Corbin and McGraw were performed, and all that was mortal of them was consigned to their narrow graves. McGraw was buried in the old Flagg Spring churchyard.

Corbin was laid to rest in the family graveyard, in sight of the home where he was born and spent the earlier part of his life. A simple slab of granite marks the grave, which serves only to perpetuate in the bosom of his friends sad memories of a sadder fate. His old mother, already bent by the weight of years, did not long survive this severe ordeal.

One brother, John H. Corbin, a veteran of the Mexican War, still lives at the old homestead; also a sister, Miss Melissa Chalfant Corbin, compose the members of the family now living. Miss Corbin is the Principal of the Kentucky Female Orphan School, at Midway, Ky., which position she has filled for thirteen years, having previously taught six years in the same school. Thus, it will be seen, that the best years of her life have been

devoted to this noble work, and the high standard of the school may well be pointed to as evidence of her superior fitness for the position.

The name of W. F. Corbin now forms a part of the history of the "Lost Cause." Honorable mention is made of his name, in a book, entitled, "Veteran Associations of Kentucky." I quote from the constitution of this book, to explain its purpose: "The object of this association shall be the cultivation of social relations among those who were honorably engaged in the service of the Confederate States of America; to preserve the fraternal ties of comradeship; to pay due respect to the remains and to the memory of those who die."

The association, of which this book treats, is incorporated under the laws of Kentucky, and in accordance with its corporate powers, numerous Confederate camps have been organized. These camps bear the name of some comrade who either fell in battle, or has died since the close of the war. One of these camps has been organized in Newport, Ky., and bears the name, William F. Corbin Camp, No. 683. It was named in honor of the subject of this article.

The fact that Corbin's name was selected from among the many noble heroes whose lives were given as willing sacrifices for the cause they loved, is a fitting recognition of his stainless life and noble character, and is, as it should be, esteemed by his family and friends, as a high mark of the respect in which he was held by his comrades.

In order that this article might be as complete as the limited time and data at hand would permit, the writer requested Mr. J. G. Kercheval and wife to favor him with such information on the subject as they might possess, and in compliance with that request, they have written short sketches; and owing to their long and close acquaintance with W. F. Corbin, as well as his family connections, they know whereof they speak.

The writer feels very grateful to them for their contributions, as will the family and relatives of the dead soldier.

I insert the articles without change.

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I knew William Corbin from childhood. He was a member of one of the oldest and most prominent families of Campbell county. He was a devout Christian; a worthy example to all his associates.

Returning to his Confederate charge in Virginia, after a visit to his home, he was caught within the Federal lines, taken as a prisoner, and condemned to be shot on Johnson's Island.

My home was in Cincinnati at the time, and as soon as he was brought to the prison in that city, I visited him in company with R. M. Bishop, Mr. Patterson and Dr. Dameron. Rev. Robert Graham also visited him frequently, engaging in religious services, and most impressive was the service held just before his departure for Johnson's Island. Many of those hardened prisoners, and even the guards, wept.

According to promise, I started for the island, but only reached Sandusky, for there I met the ministers returning from the island where they had partaken of the Lord's Supper, and this overcame me so much that I returned home, feeling that to see the sufferings of so noble and christian a character, as well as so true a friend, was more than I could endure.

Mr. Calvin DeMoss accompanied the remains of William Corbin and Jefferson McGraw, his comrade, who was executed with him, on the boat *Magnolia*, to their homes in California, Ky. So great was the respect for him whom they had loved, not a loud word was spoken. The bell of the boat tolled for miles before they reached the shore of the little town, where hundreds awaited in tears and sorrow to receive the remains and convey them to the quiet home of his boyhood, where they now rest in the family graveyard. And such was the ending of a beautiful Christian life.

J. G. KERCHEVAL.

The pure life of William Corbin had its influence on the community in which he lived. Though dead, he yet speaks. It is sweet to remember his fervent zeal and devotion to the cause of Christ. He was the faithful elder of the Christian church at California, Ky. In the dark and trying days of our civil war, he never faltered; but after the toils of the week, he would draw the children of the village together, to teach them the way of life and salvation, while many of their fathers spent the day in angry dissensions. The estrangement between neighbors grieved him. He deplored the war, and said he would never take up arms or leave his mother. Those were perilous times. How little we knew what a day might bring forth. However, the time came when he believed he must go, and when returning to his duty after a short visit to his home, he was caught, taken as a prisoner by the Union soldiers, and executed on Johnson's Island. Every effort was made to have his sentence removed, but all in vain. His aged mother, and his sister, were my guests during his imprisonment in Cincinnati, and when the last ray of hope was gone, they bade him farewell just before his departure for Johnson's Island, and returned to their quiet home in Kentucky, where his mother only survived him a short time.

MRS. J. G. KERCHEVAL.

It has been the earnest desire of the writer of this article to be unprejudiced and non-partisan in his expressions, and he trusts that he has succeeded. While there is much more that might be written, but owing to the meagerness of the records on file, and publications at the time, it leaves him without authentic data on which to base his statements, and he did not think it desirable to enter too fully into details based simply on his own recollections.

## ADDENDA.

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CHIEFLY for the sake of the grandchildren of my noble mother, have I asked my friend, Mr. DeMoss, to write the foregoing account of the character and sad fate of my beloved brother, William. I want them to know what manner of man he was, to imitate his virtues, and to reverence his name on our family records.

I wanted this sketch for the children of the dear neighbors and friends all through our county, some of whom were his classmates at Alexandria; some his pupils at California; some his fellow-laborers in the dear little church there, and some his brethren in the masonic lodge at Flagg Spring.

I wanted this sketch for those gentlemen who have honored his name by connecting it with their Confederate camp; an act that is deeply appreciated by his family.

To Mr. DeMoss, who flung to the winds his business interests at Cincinnati, to accompany me in the last desperate effort to save a precious life; who threw into that effort, regardless of time or cost, all the impulses of his ingenuous nature and all the energy of his mental acumen; to Mr. Kercheval and his wife, who walked with me through that vale of tearless agony; to Mr. and Mrs. Graham, who in that deep gloom came into my life and have ever since remained my steadfast friends; oh! to all these, I and my family are in debt, and shall be forever and forever.

Remember it, O children of my revered mother.

MIDWAY, KY.

MELISSA C. CORBIN.

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