

**A PRIVATE IN
GRAY**

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A Private in Gray by Thomas Benton Reed

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BY
THOMAS BENTON REED,

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1905



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PREFACE.

This little volume contains the narrative of a private soldier who served in the Army of Northern Virginia during the war between the States from 1862 to 1865.

It enters a field heretofore unexplored by writers of this great war, whose attention has been mainly directed to the movements of large armies, and the strategy by which their operations were directed. The writer of this modest little book has endeavored to give only the experience of a private soldier, as he stood in the ranks with his comrades, and for three long years bore the fortunes of the Confederacy on the muzzles of their guns.

It is hoped a generous public will appreciate the motives that have prompted its author to send it out into the world as an applicant for patronage and support.

CHAPTER I.

My name is Thomas Benton Reed. I was born in the State of Alabama, Blunt county, in the town of Bluntville, in the year of our Lord 1838, on Aug. 17th. My father moved from there to Texas in the year 1842. He remained there six months, and, after forting up twice from the Indians, moved to Louisiana and settled on a creek called "Half Way," because this creek was just half way between Monroe and Natchitoches, and this settlement was made on the old San Antone, or military, road, which was the first road cut through that part of the State.

And right here, at my father's camp, something happened, which is the first thing I remember.

It was this wise: Father had built his camp on the creek. One day he and mother and some of the children were gone some half mile away, where they were building a house; but before this, father had killed a beef and had left the beef's head near the camp, and three wolves came and carried off that beef head. I never will forget how scared I was. My oldest sister was there. I remember very well how she stored my little sister and myself away in the camp, and how she got a big stick and stood in front of the camp and kept the wolves off of us. I remember that two of them were black and one was yellow. I will pass on now.

As a boy who is raised away back in a rural district does not see much, nor know much nor ever gets but a slight education, there is very little to tell. I will say that I grew up healthy and strong, with a good constitution, and before I was 21 years old married Miss Elizabeth Amanda Hart—

in A. D. 1859, on July the 6th, and in June, 1860, our first son was born.

Time sped on, and in 1861 that cruel war broke out between the States, and the whole country was thrown into a state of excitement and turmoil. All of the young men, and especially the poor young men, were enlisting and going to the front. My two elder brothers enlisted in 1861 and were assigned to the Army of Northern Virginia, and in January or February, 1862, a number of their company re-enlisted and came home on furlough. I was very anxious to go and be a soldier boy, still I did not know how I could leave my wife and baby.

Some time in February or early in March, in 1862, I went to Vernon, the Parish site of Jackson parish, Louisiana, an an officer of my brothers' company was there drumming up volunteers, and I went forward and joined the company—for three years, or during the war. The officer in charge gave orders to meet him there on the 12th of March to start to Virginia, and I only had six or eight days to stay with my wife and sweet baby and to go and tell mother and father, sisters and brothers "good-bye," and to make all my preparations. The war by this time had become a very serious matter, and you have no idea how I mourned and grieved over the rash step I had taken, and often I went behind the house and kicked myself. But time rolled on and the day came when I must bid them all "good-bye," with ninety-nine chances to one that I never would see them again. Now smile, you that never went through such an ordeal.

Well, when I left home I had clothes enough to load two men. My father-in-law had a butcher-knife about two feet long and weighing about one and a half pounds. I took the knife with me, with which I was going to chop Yankees into sausage-meat. We started. The old men went as far