

JAMES S. HALL

CAPT. JAMES S. HALL, deceased, was one of the men who valiantly fought for the preservation of the Union during the dark days of the Civil war, and was later an honored and valued citizen of Renovo. He was a native of Pennsylvania, his birth occurring September 1, 1828, in Bald Eagle Valley, Centre county, a son of T. M. and Uretta (Roberts) Hall, who spent their entire lives in that county. The Captain's primary education was obtained in the schools of Bellefonte, and he subsequently attended the Meadville College for some years, after which he successfully engaged in teaching in the public schools for a number of years. He also served as deputy sheriff under his father from 1846 to 1849, in his native county.

In 1850, in company with E. B. Lipton, also of Milesburg, Centre county, Mr. Hall went to California, expecting to make his fortune in the gold mines. The venture, however, did not prove very successful, and later he was appointed and served as deputy sheriff of Nappa county, that State. Failing health at length caused him to return home in 1854, and the same year he wedded Miss Mary A. Iddings, daughter of Joseph and Margaret (Henry) Iddings, also natives of Pennsylvania. Her father, a farmer by occupation, died in 1865, and her mother passed away in 1884, at the advanced age of ninety-one years. In their family were ten children, four of whom are yet living: William, a resident of Centre county; Mrs. Ann Moore, of Grampian, Clearfield Co., Penn.; Mrs. Lydia H. Root, of Blair county, Penn.; and Mrs. Hall. To James S. Hall and his wife were born ten children, of whom four sons and one daughter are now deceased. Those living are: Alice L., wife of John McDonald, of Driftwood, Penn.; Edgar H., of Salisbury, N. C.; and Wilburetta, Mary and Cornelia, all at home.

After his return to Pennsylvania our subject taught school and engaged in clerking until the outbreak of the Civil war. In 1861 he assisted Capt. Kiernan in recruiting Company D, 53d P. Y. I., of which company he was commissioned lieutenant, and some time after entering the service was detailed for duty in the Signal Corps. At that period the department was in its infancy, and he rendered his superior officers valuable service in raising it to a high state of perfection, which, later on, proved invaluable to the army. At Fredericksburg he was with Gen. Burnside, and when Gen. Hooker succeeded to the command he was retained, and continued at headquarters. After the battle of Chancellorsville, when the army moved northward, he accompanied it to Gettysburg, and was sent to Little Round Top. On the memorable 2d of July, when Gen. Longstreet was forming his column to assault that stronghold, which is universally conceded to have been the key to the position occupied by the Union army, he gave timely notice to Gen. Meade of the contemplated

movement. Gen. Warren, chief of the staff, hastened to Round Top to ascertain the situation. Seizing the Captain's field glass he hastily glanced in the direction of the Confederate lines, but failed to note, from some cause, the forming column. Unusual as it was for Gen. Warren to be impatient, he censured the Captain for being unnecessarily alarmed. The controversy continued for considerable time, Captain Hall insisting that he was correct in his opinions, and that the peculiar activity and formation he had noted and signaled to headquarters was the precursor of an assault. A little later it became apparent to Gen. Warren that it was only too true. Aids were immediately dispatched with the utmost haste, and troops were hurried up on a double-quick, and arrived just in time to meet and hurl back Longstreet's assaulting column, led by the Louisiana Tigers. A moment later, and Round Top would have been lost to the Union Army. The timely warning of the signal officer was all that saved it.

A few years since, when Gen. Longstreet visited Gettysburg for the purpose of viewing the battlefield, he lingered along his old line where it confronted Round Top. He referred to the terrific struggle which had occurred at that point, and is reported as pleasantly remarking: "It is all over now, and I hold no ill feeling toward the men who repulsed the assault on Round Top, " but added, "he could not quite forgive [the] one who stood on the summit and vigorously waved his signal flag, notifying Gen. Meade of his premeditated assault. " That officer was Capt. James S. Hall, and his timely warning doubtless saved that stronghold from capture. Capt. Hall continued to serve with the Army of the Potomac until the South laid down its arms, and peace was once more restored.

Returning to Pennsylvania, Capt. Hall located in Renovo, and when the Philadelphia & Erie railroad established its shops there, he was offered and accepted a clerical position, which he acceptably filled until failing health caused his retirement. For the last six or seven years of his life he was an invalid and was unable to do any work, but bore his sufferings without a murmur. He was perfectly conscious of his approaching end, and died a Christian soldier, with his full armor on. He departed this life March 2, 1896, and his death was widely and deeply mourned, for his friends were many. From early life he was an earnest and consistent member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and fraternally was an honored member of the Masonic order, and of the Grand Army of the Republic. His estimable wife, who still survives him, continues to make her home in Renovo, and is a most popular and highly respected lady, being widely known for her many generous deeds and kindly words.