

The Death of Roderick Gen. N. B. Forrests Favorite Horse

"In a man of General Forrest's fierce combative spirit the sentimental side was seldom revealed, but during the clamor of the battle of Thompson's Station there occurred an incident which did stir the General's deepest sentiments ---the death of his favorite horse, Roderick.

General Forrest was mounted that day on his favorite horse, Roderick, and desiring to press the enemy from a strong position across an open field he appeared upon the flank of one of his regiments as it lay taking the fire and, in his characteristic words, ordered it to "move up". At the command the men leaped to their feet and, with loud cheers, dashed forward under a hot fire.

The General, attended by his son, Lieutenant William Forest, accompanied the charge, as was his mount when the point to be gained was of importance. In the brief conflict, which resulted in the overthrow of the enemy, Roderick was wounded in three places. This event gave the General so much concern that he immediately dismounted and charged his son to lead Roderick to the rear and have his wants well attended to by the hostlers in charge of his extra horses. He then mounted his son's horse, which had also been wounded, and pressed forward in pursuit of the enemy.

On reaching the hostlers, Lieutenant Forrest had the wounded animal stripped of saddle and bridle for his comfort, supposing that he was too badly hurt to attempt to get out of the way. As soon as he was at liberty, Roderick, still restless under the excitement of battle, began to nose among the group, evidently in search of his master, a habit he had frequently indulged in at camp, where he was rarely put under the restraint of the halter. In the progress of affairs at the front at his stage, General Forrest's voice, clear and unmistakable, was heard in the distance, directing his line in another attack. Roderick instantly pricked up his ears to get the direction and, neighing eagerly in answer, dashed away before he could be intercepted, guided by the sound of battle, which at that moment broke out afresh.

Lieutenant Forrest, fearing his father's displeasure, immediately mounted and, with several attendants, gave chase with a view of capturing the wounded horse before he could get far away; but the latter went at such speed that he outstripped his pursuers, and when found was following quietly at the heels of the General, having leaped three fences in his progress, besides getting another wound from which he was bleeding freely. As expected, the General was in great wrath over the supposed negligence; but when the nature of the case was explained, he burst into tears and, caressing Roderick for the last time, he turned away from the scene and a short time later received the surrender of Colonel Coburn and two thousand of his men.

Truly the cypress was entwined with the laurel for him on that day, in the death of Roderick, which occurred in the moment of victory. By his order the faithful animal was interred on the field of battle where his brave spirit passed away, a fitting sacrifice to the God of War, and with a name that will blend for all time with the deeds of his matchless rider."

From an account quoted in *Tennessee's War* by Stanley R. Horn. Diane Allen is a horse lover who collects old books about the Civil War. She lives near the battlefield of Chickamauga.