

**S**CRIBNER, GENERAL B. F., of New Albany, was born September 20, 1825, in that city, which his father, Abner Scribner, with two brothers, laid out in the year 1813. General Scribner is by profession a chemist and druggist, having been for many years proprietor of the largest drug house in the city. Early in life he manifested strong military tastes; and while still a mere youth became a member of the Spencer Grays, a military company composed of the young men of New Albany. By their superior drill and soldierly appearance, the Spencer Grays won an enviable reputation at home and abroad, and bore off the honors on all occasions of competition with other companies. At the military encampment near Louisville, Kentucky, in July, 1845, they were awarded a gold-mounted sword. Upon the breaking out of the Mexican War, when, after the battle of Palo Alto, the country feared for the safety of General Taylor, they tendered their services to the Governor; and after the call was made on Indiana for troops they were accepted, and formed Company A, 2d Indiana Volunteers. A little volume, entitled, "Camp Life of a Volunteer," published by Gregg, Elliott & Co., of Philadelphia, contains extracts from General Scribner's private journal, giving a vivid description of the battle of Buena Vista and many incidents of the war. During his year of service he was promoted to the rank of sergeant, which was the highest vacancy that occurred in his company. General Lane publicly commended him on the field for his conduct at the battle of Buena Vista. Early on the morning of February 23d his regiment was thrown to the front, and was opposed by three thousand infantry and twelve hundred lancers, flanked on the left by a battery of five Mexican guns. Here they stubbornly maintained their position until they had fired twenty-one rounds, and were ordered to fall back. In the retreat, with others of the company, Mr. Scribner joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Mississippi - Colonel Jeff. Davis's regiment - which, with General Taylor, was just arriving on the field from Saltillo. With this regiment they shared the varied fortunes of the day. Their gallantry was specially noted, and Colonel Jeff. Davis afterward sent to their company for the names of the few who had behaved so nobly; but they declined to give them, honorably refusing to gain a reputation at the expense of equally brave comrades, who had been placed in other positions. When the nation was awakened by the guns of Sumter, General Scribner's patriotism aroused his military spirit, and military books and tactics occupied his attention during all his leisure moments. He entered a company enrolled for home defense, and, feeling himself bound by a large and complicated business to remain at home, tried to content himself with doing all that he could by forming and drilling companies. He was promoted from grade to grade until he was made colonel of the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment Indiana organized militia. As the war progressed, however, he yielded to the conviction that his duty was in the field. He was offered commands by many officers in different parts of the state, but declined; and, having been authorized by the Governor, raised a regiment, and went into camp at New Albany, August 22, 1861. In September General Buckner advanced on Louisville, and Rosecrans was ordered out to meet him. Colonel Scribner's regiment, the 38<sup>th</sup> Indiana Volunteers, was then without arms or accouterments; but, on being asked by General Anderson if they could go to the rescue, Colonel Scribner promptly assented. They were partially armed and equipped September 21, 1861, and joined the gallant Rousseau, who, under Sherman, was moving on Muldros Hill and Elizabethtown. Without blankets or tents, and almost without food for four days, the brave fellows entered the service, inspired by the hope of meeting and crushing the enemy. They were first assigned to Wood's brigade, in the same division. During the spring and summer the command was employed to keep open the

communication with Mitchell, at Huntsville, and Bell, at Corinth. In May, 1862, the 38<sup>th</sup> marched to Florence, Alabama, and back – a distance of two hundred miles – in ten days. Immediately after their return, Negley's demonstration against Chattanooga was made, and Colonel Scribner commanded the brigade. This expedition was a success as far as it went, and, had the advantage then gained been followed up by a sufficient force, important results would have ensued. The enemy's artillery was silenced, and they were driven from their works on the river. They would have capitulated, but the Union force was insufficient to hold the place, and surrender was not demanded. On the return march, Colonel Scribner was left with his brigade to bring up the rear, a task fraught with danger and difficulty. This he did with credit to himself and safety to his charge. On their return they encamped at Shelbyville, Kentucky, making the march of over three hundred miles in fifteen days. In July the regiment was ordered to Battle Creek, and remained until Buell abandoned the Tennessee River, when Colonel Scribner was ordered to advance and take command of the post and fortifications at Ducherd. When the army came up he moved on with it to Louisville. The hardships of this terrible march from Alabama to Louisville, and the subsequent pursuit of Bragg in Kentucky, with the terrible struggle at Chaplain Hills, are vividly portrayed in the history of the 38<sup>th</sup> Regiment. The brunt of the battle fell upon Rousseau's division, in which Colonel Scribner was placed at Battle Creek. Jackson's and Terrill's forces, being new levies, and unable to withstand the fearful odds against them, soon melted away before the flower of the Confederate army. Not so, however, with Rousseau's veterans, who, in one thin line, fought with a determination hardly paralleled in the annals of the war. Here Colonel Scribner exhibited his fitness to command; cool and self-possessed, noticing every detail of the movements of his own regiment, he was ever on the alert to discover the movements of the army. The assistance rendered by his constant advice is acknowledged in the official reports. Here he began to reap the reward of his patient labors in instructing the officers and men in their duties under all contingencies, and here the importance of discipline and drill became apparent. These brave men, besides the 10<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, for two hours and a half held their ground before the dense masses of the enemy, under the most destructive fire. Lead hail from small arms, and grape, canister, and shell, cut up their ranks, but not a man was seen to falter. Their colors were riddled; the staff was shot in two places; six of the color guard were killed and two wounded, leaving only one unhurt. Out of four hundred men they lost one hundred and fifty-seven killed and wounded. Having exhausted their own ammunition, they used that of their killed and wounded comrades; and then, with fixed bayonets, resolved to die rather than retreat until the order was given. Their colonel had told them that the safety of the Seventeenth Brigade depended on their holding their position. When at last orders came, they fell back with a coolness not exceeded on battalion drill. While lying down waiting for ammunition, they were trampled upon by Hood's new recruits, who in terror were flying from the field with the enemy at their heels. Without a round of ammunition, but with fixed bayonets, the noble 38<sup>th</sup> yielded not an inch, resolved to try the virtue of cold steel. A soldier's bravery can be put to no severer test. In this engagement Colonel Scribner was wounded in the leg, and his horse was shot under him. Soon after the battle he was placed in command of the brigade – Colonel Harris, its former gallant commander, being forced by ill-health to resign. The First Brigade, formerly the Ninth, composed of the 38<sup>th</sup> Indiana, 10<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin, 2d, 33d, and 94<sup>th</sup> Ohio, under the command of Colonel Scribner, bore an important part in the battle of Stone River. With the rest of Rousseau's division, they were sent into the cedars

to support McCook, who was being driven back by the enemy. Here, as usual, it fell to Scribner's command to bear the brunt of the battle. Two of his regiments, the 2d and 33d Ohio, had been ordered to support the batteries on the pike, and bore a conspicuous part in the repulse of the Confederates as they charged upon these batteries. In the mean time, Colonel Scribner, with the three other regiments, maneuvered through the cedars as the movements of the enemy made it necessary, and was ordered back to the pike. His leading regiment, the 94<sup>th</sup> Ohio, had just emerged from the thicket into the field on the left of the Nashville Pike, when they came upon the enemy retreating after their repulse in the attack on the batteries, and pursued them into the cedars, completely routing them. He soon after met a column of Union forces retiring before the enemy. Opening his line, Colonel Scribner permitted them to pass, when, elated by success, the Confederates came down in dense masses to within twenty-five paces of his line. Here they were checked by a galling fire, and here occurred the most desperate struggle of the day. For a time Colonel Scribner appeared surrounded, but, by slightly retiring his left regiment, he obtained a cross-fire. For twenty minutes the command stood firm, although fearfully diminished in numbers, and only retired reluctantly when ordered to fall back. Colonel Scribner commanded the brigade through the Tennessee campaign and through Alabama, until they arrived at Chattanooga, when, by the reorganization of the army by General Grant, he again assumed command of his regiment, which was transferred to the First Brigade, First Division, and Fourteenth Army Corps, under Brigadier-general Carlin. In the battles around and upon Lookout Mountain, including the assault upon Mission Ridge, the regiment rendered gallant service. In December, 1863, Colonel Scribner succeeded in re-enlisting the majority of his regiment as veterans, at Rossville, Georgia, and January 3, 1864, started with them for New Albany on furlough. With his officers he immediately commenced recruiting, and afterward returned to the field with a number of new recruits. Prior to the summer campaign of 1864, the 38<sup>th</sup> Regiment was transferred from the First to the Third Brigade, same division, and the command of the brigade was assigned to Colonel Scribner. He commanded in all skirmishes and engagements until after the battle of Kenesaw Mountain, when he became ill, and the command devolved upon Colonel Givin, of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ohio. This ended Colonel Scribner's active and brilliant military career. His name had been frequently sent to the Senate, for confirmation as a brigadier-general, by the lamented President Lincoln, but failed from non-action by that body and from the assigned cause of no vacancy. Whatever prevented a just recognition of his distinguished services, it can not be said that he neglected his duties in the field to come home and "log roll" among politicians for his promotion. At length, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, 1864, he was appointed and confirmed brevet brigadier-general. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, finding his health much impaired from continued exposure and over-exertion, he offered his resignation, which was accepted. Nothing but patriotic ardor sent him into the field. He took up his sword in vindication of his principles; and now that the war is over, the Union preserved, he resumed his usual business, asking and expecting nothing at the hands of his countrymen but their respect and esteem. He is no schemer, and used no undue means to compass his promotion, conscious of his own merit, and content with whatever position the government saw fit to grant him. He did his duty without faltering and was always at the head of his regiment. No commander has won more esteem from his subordinates than General Scribner, or retired from military life with a brighter record. In January, 1865, General Scribner was appointed by President Lincoln collector of internal revenue for the Second Collecting District of Indiana, in which position

he served six years, to the satisfaction of the government and the public. Notwithstanding the abuse and accusations made against officers in this difficult and responsible service, no charge was ever made against the integrity and efficiency of General Scribner. He retained his interest in the drug business, which was conducted by his partner, until February, 1878, and then established in New York City a drug brokerage office. This he abandoned the following August to accept the appointment of United States treasury agent at Alaska. He was assigned to duty on the Island of St. Paul, a seal and whale fishing station of considerable importance in the North Pacific. General Scribner was married, December 20, 1849, to Miss Anna Martha Maginness, daughter of Doctor E. A. Maginness. She was born at West Chester, Pennsylvania. Having lost her mother in infancy, she found care and love with her mother's sisters and brother, of Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The brother referred to was John Maginness, who for more than thirty years held an important position in the Treasury Department at Washington, District of Columbia, having been chief clerk and assistant secretary of the treasury. He took his little niece to Washington at twelve years of age, and lavished upon her all that affection and money could give. The thoroughness of her education, the mental discipline and the social advantages here received, have borne their legitimate fruit in her useful life. Her father married again, and removed to New Albany, Indiana, and it was while visiting him in 1849 that she met General Scribner. They have had ten children, seven being now living – five sons and two daughters. One son and one daughter graduated from college with honor, and all are indebted to their mother for their success and proficiency in school. She has preserved to an unusual degree the remembrance of her school exercises, delighting in mathematics and abstract subjects, and has consequently been able to render her children much assistance in their studies. The charms of her person and mind have endeared her not only to her own family, but to a large circle of friends.