



DEATH OF GEN. NELSON AT THE GALT HOUSE, LOUISVILLE.

The Killing of Nelson.

In those momentous days, when every hour seemed to have its shock and its terror, men's minds became in a manner numb to startling events. In spite of this the tragedy which occurred in the Galt House in Louisville, Sept. 29, sent sorrow to every loyal heart. Wounded, worn out and aching in every fiber of his being from the mismanagement of his subordinates which had brought about the disaster of Richmond, Gen. Wm. Nelson arrived in Louisville. He was to take command of the city, and organize its defense out of the new regiments being hurried forward to him. Time and circumstances were such as to try souls of a far more equably-minded man than the turbulent, unsparing autocrat of the quarter-deck. Among those directed to report to him was Brig.-Gen. Jefferson C. Davis, who had won laurels in command of a brigade at Pea Ridge. Davis was naturally of a rather sour, saturnine disposition and jealous of his personal dignity. There are any number of accounts current as to what happened between him and Nelson. The best supported of these indicate that when Davis reported to Nelson the latter assailed him in the harsh, irritable way he was too often in the habit of using when addressing officers, and which must have been greatly increased by his wounds, his recent experiences and his overwhelming responsibilities. Davis answered back very hotly, and the altercation proceeded until the epithets became intolerable. Davis went away and brooded over Nelson's language, and, finally returning, demanded an apology, which Nelson refused with more angry words. At this Davis threw a ball of paper which he had been nervously rolling with his fingers into Nelson's face. Nelson retorted by slapping Davis's face. The latter turned to one of his friends, borrowed a revolver and fired at Nelson, striking him near the heart, from which wound he died shortly afterward. The unfortunate affair aroused great intensity of feeling in the army, as, after all, Nelson's men had come to feel a deep affection for him, and rather enjoyed and prided themselves in his hot, hasty tongue. On the other hand, many who had suffered from his scorching words were not a little pleased that punishment had been dealt out to him. In the hurry and rush of those pregnant times but little notice was taken of this affair. There was some form of inquiry, but Davis retained his command, and eventually led the Fourteenth Corps in the latter part of the Atlanta campaign, in the march to the sea, through the Carolinas, and in the Grand Review. There is no doubt, however, that the tragedy saddened all his life, embittering even his best days, and that the specter of William Nelson was his frequent visitor in those chill, weak hours that must come to every man when the earth is still in the solemn black of midnight.