

FORREST.

No one, not even NAPOLEON, ever put the military art more completely than did General NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST when, in answer to a woman who asked him the secret of his success, he replied, "Ma'am, I got there first with the most men." General MAURICE now quotes this trenchant epigram, on which, though NAPOLEON did not utter it, he always acted. It pains us to find The New York Tribune rebuking General MAURICE for misquotation, and alleging that what General FORREST said was, "I got there firstest with the mostest men."

We are aware that this impossible form is the one in which FORREST's great epigram is generally quoted, the explanation accompanying it being the one The Tribune now gives, that FORREST was an uneducated man. No uneducated man would think of such an intricate and complicated phrase. Nor is it Southern dialect. It is not dialect, but "baby talk." The truth is that somebody who was trying to make FORREST talk what he imagined to be Southern dialect evolved that incredible phraseology, and has been followed slavishly ever since. What FORREST said undoubtedly was, "Ma'am, I got thar fust with the most men."

FORREST was a genius whom the Confederacy discovered too late. After the war JOSEPH E. JOHNSTON pronounced him "the greatest soldier the civil war produced." General BEAUREGARD said that "FORREST's capacity for war seemed to be limited only by the opportunities for its display." General SHERMAN called him "the most remarkable man our civil war produced on either side." At FORREST's funeral Governor PORTER of Tennessee remarked to JEFFERSON DAVIS that history had "named him as one of the half dozen greatest soldiers of the country," to which Mr. DAVIS replied:

I agree with you. The trouble was that the Generals commanding in the Southwest never appreciated FORREST until it was too late. Their judgment was that he was a bold and enterprising partisan raider and rider. I was misled by them, and I never knew how to measure him until I read his reports of his campaign across the Tennessee River in 1864. This induced a study of his earlier reports, and after that I was prepared to adopt what you are pleased to name as the judgment of history.

If The Tribune wishes to know how General FORREST really talked, here is a sample quoted by his friend General OATES, in his "War Between the Union and the Confederacy." FORREST is describing a hand-to-hand fight at the battle of Fort Donelson:

I thought that I could kill a man by strikin' him over the head with my sabre, but I found that while I could knock him off his horse, he would jump up and run away. I then tried the p'int on one, and when he fell he lay thar. I looked up and down the line, and saw that the boys were mixing with them. I tried to think of the command "Right thrust" to give them, but could not, and instead yelled aloud, "Punch them, boys; damn them, punch 'em!" They understood and obeyed that command.