

---

# Dan Showalter—California Secessionist

By CLARENCE C. CLENDENEN

---

IN MAY, 1861, California was far distant from the scene of the troubles that were besetting the national government in the East—so far distant that there was relatively little popular interest and almost no excitement. There was, nevertheless, a vociferous minority that would have been only too glad to see California join the Southern Confederacy, or secede from the Union and form a separate Pacific Republic. Partisan feeling was actually deep, despite the lack of widespread interest and excitement and the absence of many overt demonstrations like the duel in which Judge David S. Terry killed Senator David C. Broderick.

At the end of the month of May, the Twelfth Legislature of the State of California was nearing the end of its session. By far the greater part of its time and effort had been spent on local matters outside the realm of national politics, and consequently there had been few evidences on the floor of either house of the feeling that existed between the factions. On the few occasions upon which national issues had come before the legislature the supporters of the Union had shown a clear majority. For example, on February 2, 1861, early in the session, Assemblyman Charles W. Piercy, a Douglas Democrat from San Bernardino County, introduced a resolution: "*Resolved*, as the sense of this House, that the troubles existing in the Atlantic States are justly chargeable to the sectional differences advocated by the Republican party."<sup>1</sup>

Immediately a motion was made to table the resolution, but opponents of the motion, led by Assemblyman Dan (or Daniel) Showalter, an outspoken Douglas Democrat from Mariposa County, defeated it.

CLARENCE C. CLENDENEN, a retired Cavalry officer, received his B.S. from the United States Military Academy at West Point, his A.M. from Michigan State University, and his Ph.D. (history) from Stanford University. In addition to his military career (1920-1954), Colonel Clendenen has had a lengthy academic career, teaching at West Point, Michigan State, Stanford, and Menlo School and College.

Showalter, successful in forcing a vote on the resolution, then attempted to have the ayes and noes recorded, but in this he failed. The final vote on Piercy's resolution proved that the assembly positively did not concur in the idea that the Republican party was responsible for the troubles in the East.<sup>2</sup>

Dan Showalter, who aided Piercy's attempt to fasten the guilt for the nation's troubles on the Republican party, was a native of Pennsylvania. He had been in California since 1852, was a resident of Coulterville, and was serving his second term as a member of the legislature. Like most of the inhabitants of Mariposa County at that time, he was a miner. There is no known picture of him, but he has been described as a tall man, over six feet in height, with a flaming red beard and oddly contrasting black eyes.<sup>3</sup> The first few weeks of the Twelfth Legislature had been occupied with the exciting business of electing a United States senator, and Showalter's name had been put forward by his friends. He polled only a few scattered votes for the senatorship, but he was a strong candidate for the speakership of the assembly. Only after the seventy-third ballot did he have his name withdrawn from the contest. He was sufficiently popular and influential, however, to spend a considerable part of the session as speaker *pro-tem*. As a member of the assembly Dan Showalter was diligent in attendance and assiduous in the performance of all public duties during both of his terms, without taking a particularly conspicuous part on the floor.

As the end of May, 1861, approached, the weather was probably hot in Sacramento, and the members of the legislature were understandably anxious to get back to their private affairs. Tempers were undoubtedly somewhat frayed when, late in the afternoon of May 17, the assembly took up consideration of a joint resolution which had been passed and submitted by the senate:

*Resolved*, by the Senate, the Assembly concurring, That the people of California are devoted to the Constitution and Union of the United States, and will not fail in fidelity and fealty to that Constitution and Union now in the hour of trial and peril: that California is ready to maintain the rights and honor of the National Government at home and abroad, and at all times to respond to any request that may be made upon her to defend the Republic against foreign and domestic foes.<sup>4</sup>

Under the rules in effect in the assembly there could be no debate upon such a resolution—only a vote. In spite of the rules, nevertheless,

the first member called on to record his vote, Assemblyman Fleming Amyx, of Tuolumne, demanded permission to explain why he would vote against the resolution. Permission was denied, but the second member to vote, A. W. Blair, of Monterey, likewise demanded leave to explain his vote. There were objections, but still practically every member who was opposed to the resolution attempted to get in a few words explaining his position. Thus the voting went, going steadily in favor of the resolution, until near the end of the vote, when it became the turn of Dan Showalter to stand and cast his vote.

"Mr. Speaker," he said, as he arose, "I ask leave to explain my vote, and I want to see the gentleman that will rise and object."

Piercy rose. "I make the objection. Mr. Blair asked leave to explain his vote and was refused. If it is just to refuse in one instance it is in another, and I do most emphatically object now to the gentleman from Mariposa explaining his vote."

Showalter replied, "I have only to say that no man ever yet heard me object to any gentleman explaining his vote. [Piercy attempted to interrupt, but Showalter ignored him.] It is a right which I have always maintained, and I have nothing but contempt for any gentleman who does object." Thereupon he voted "emphatically no."

The final result was overwhelmingly in favor of the resolution, the vote being 49 to 12.

The Southern sympathizers were thoroughly ruffled. Assemblyman Thomas Laspeyre, of San Joaquin, who had consistently followed Showalter's lead throughout the session, took the floor "to thank all the members who voted to allow me to explain my vote—who had courtesy enough to allow members to explain their votes upon an important question like this, when there was no lack of time. . . . And at the same time I rise to express my supreme contempt for all those who objected to it."

In the tense atmosphere and with the frontier tradition of personal violence, such words could have been tinder in a keg of powder—especially as it was the second time within a few minutes that almost identical terms had been used. Laspeyre, however, mollified the only member who seemed disposed to accept the challenge. But Piercy, nettled by Showalter's obvious reference to himself, rose to a question of privilege, saying, "I regret exceedingly that the gentleman from Mariposa has seen

fit to use the language he has. . . . I would ask him now, as an honorable gentleman, whether he wishes to make any explanation.”

Showalter replied curtly, “I have nothing to retract,” whereupon Piercy angrily said, “Then I hurl it back in his teeth, and with all the contempt that language can express; and I have not language strong enough to express it.”

As mentioned earlier, both Showalter and Piercy were Douglas Democrats, and the record shows that they had usually voted alike on most of the measures before the assembly. There are indications, indeed, that their views on national questions were not far removed from each other. The rift between them now, however, was deep. On May 20, three days later, Piercy again rose to a question of privilege. In view of the cordial relations that had always existed between himself and the gentleman from Mariposa, he now asked whether the words that gentleman had uttered were intended as a personal insult.

Dan Showalter was not conciliatory in the least. He referred to a statement he had made on May 18, in which he said that he had been misquoted in the *Sacramento Union*, and that he had merely wanted any objector to stand up and identify himself. “The language was plain,” he said, “and was not susceptible of two constructions.”

From the perspective of nearly a century later, the whole affair seems trivial, but it was not trivial to the participants. A gentleman’s honor was a very touchy matter in the California of 1861. At some time in the next few days Piercy formally challenged Showalter to a duel, and under the accepted code of the time there could be only one outcome. The duel must be fought. Dueling was against the laws of the state, but the laws were not supported by public opinion, and duels were fairly commonplace. Friends of the two parties met in Sacramento and arranged that the meeting would take place on May 25, either in Marin or San Mateo County. The weapons were to be rifles, each man to choose the kind he liked best. The distance agreed upon was forty yards.

The place finally selected was in Marin County, about eight miles west of San Rafael. The date was changed to May 26, a Sunday, and Showalter and his friends arrived at the rendezvous at eleven o’clock. (Showalter’s second was Laspeyre.) Piercy and his party were already there, well hidden in the brush. Before arrangements could be com-

pleted the Sheriff suddenly appeared with warrants for the arrest of both principals. Piercy was still concealed, but the Sheriff haled Showalter to San Rafael, where he was promptly released by County Judge Frink, since the county attorney who had sworn out the complaint was not present in court to substantiate his charges.

Piercy and the other members of the dueling party, meanwhile, had gone to the Fairfax Ranch, a short distance west of the town. Upon Showalter's arrival, and after everybody had taken some refreshment, the group proceeded to a secluded place on the ranch. Showalter won the choice of position, and upon the word of the referee, Colonel Thomas Hayes of San Francisco, the principals fired. Neither was hit on the first fire, although Showalter felt the wind from Piercy's shot. Showalter exclaimed loudly, "Load the weapons again." Since he was the challenged party, under the code it was his privilege to demand a second shot.

On the second fire Piercy started, threw back his head, and dropped heavily to the ground. Shot through the mouth, in spite of the efforts of the surgeon, he was dead within three minutes.

So ended the last of the notable duels of California history. Because the quarrel leading to the tragedy originated during the vote on a resolution of loyalty to the Union, and because Piercy voted for the resolution while Showalter voted against it, legend immediately caused Piercy to become a martyr to the Union and the cause of antislavery. One historian commented, "As in the Broderick and Terry duel and also in that of Johnston and Ferguson, it was the anti-slavery man that was killed."<sup>5</sup> Another state historian has said, "This was the last of the political duels in California, and as in all others the pro-slavery man was victorious."<sup>6</sup>

It is highly doubtful, however, that Piercy was particularly antislavery in his sentiments, and his resolution accusing the Republican party of being responsible for the national crisis does not argue any deep devotion to the policies of Lincoln's administration. The quarrel that led to the duel was clearly personal, in spite of its political background, and grew out of Piercy's hot-headed resentment at Showalter's truculent and tactless remarks. Dan Showalter, far from being the aggressor in the duel, was the challenged party, and Piercy's action in keeping the quarrel alive led to his own death.

For several months after Piercy's death Showalter dropped from the sight of history. He was at Carson City during part of this time, but there is nothing to show whether he was deliberately hiding, or merely remaining inconspicuous in a place where the writs of California could not run.<sup>7</sup> Whether or not he had ever been a red-hot partisan of the South, that role was now forced upon him, and he was a marked man in California.

During the several months following the duel events moved fast. The people of California had it forced upon them that the war in the East actually involved the entire nation. The Governor of California was unexpectedly called upon to furnish a contingent of volunteers, initially to relieve the Regular Army in safeguarding the Overland Trail, and eventually to move to recover the Southwest from the Confederate invaders who had taken possession during the summer. Although the majority of the population of the state were Union sympathizers, there was a vociferous minority of pro-Confederates, and southern California was known to be a hotbed of Southern sympathy. It was widely believed (and may have been true) that there were subversive organizations secretly prepared to seize the state at the first favorable opportunity. In an atmosphere of such suspicion it was undoubtedly feared that Dan Showalter might become a focus for the disloyal. While the Union intelligence services, in the fall of 1861, had not yet attained the efficiency they later achieved, numerous hints between the lines in the *Official Records* suggest strongly that an attempt was made to keep Showalter under surveillance—a fact of which he was probably unaware.

Early in November, 1861, Jonathan T. Warner (the owner of Warner's Ranch, and better known as J. J. Warner) wrote a brief note to Colonel James H. Carleton, who commanded the California volunteers in southern California, informing him that there was a party of twenty-eight men at El Monte, a few miles from Los Angeles, awaiting Showalter's arrival.<sup>8</sup> This confirmed a report forwarded on October 28 by Major Edwin A. Rigg from Camp Wright, near San Diego, that a party was being formed at El Monte to go to Texas via Fort Yuma.<sup>9</sup>

Carleton was deeply interested in Showalter's movements, and was obviously not entirely ignorant of them. On the same day on which Warner wrote to him, and before he could possibly have received War-

ner's note, he wrote both to Rigg, and to Major Edward E. Eyre, at San Bernardino, directing that both Showalter and Judge David S. Terry (in the event of their capture) must be made to take the oath of allegiance to the Union. If they refused, they were to be held. "There are plotters all about us, without a doubt."<sup>10</sup>

On the same day, November 4, 1861, Louisiana-born Lieutenant Colonel Joseph R. West sent a despatch from Fort Yuma to Carleton with some letters captured from a messenger on the road. They were sufficiently important to cause West to send them by a special express for Carleton's examination. Unfortunately the letters have not been preserved, but it appears that they had to do with Showalter's movements.<sup>11</sup>

Unknown to Showalter himself, in all probability, the net was beginning to close about him. On November 5 Carleton sent a positive order to West:

... Mr. Showalter with a party of Texans from El Monte will attempt to cross the desert; so, too, doubtless, Judge Terry. Give me a good account of these two men. ... The time has gone by when matters are to be minced ... with such open and avowed traitors.

Carleton closed his instructions with a broad hint that if West found some good excuse for hanging Showalter and Terry, there would be no mourning.<sup>12</sup>

Almost a week later, on November 11, Jonathan T. Warner again wrote briefly to Carleton, saying that a party of about twenty men had just left Los Angeles en route for Texas, and that "Showalter is now in this city."<sup>13</sup> A few days later the United States Marshal informed Carleton that Showalter's party had left the vicinity, and were planning to travel by way of the Mojave River and Mojave Crossings.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear why Showalter was not seized while he was in Los Angeles. Probably the information did not reach Carleton in time for him to act upon it, but this is pure speculation.

Dan Showalter and his party had disappeared, meanwhile, and the search was on. Major Rigg, at Camp Wright, an old acquaintance of Showalter, was leaving no stone unturned. On November 27 a strong cavalry patrol under the command of Second Lieutenant Chauncey R. Wellman made a lengthy and fruitless search through the hills along

the party's anticipated route. But while Wellman was absent from Camp Wright additional information came in, and Wellman and his tired troopers again took the road, on the same day. Late in the afternoon of the following day the patrol encountered and captured a man named Hamilton, who claimed to be searching for a stolen horse. Hamilton, however, had in his possession a note that struck Wellman as being suspicious. (Unfortunately the note has been lost.) Consequently, Wellman continued, and at Temecula obtained information that a party of sixteen men had been there the preceding night, but had left that morning for parts unknown. The party's trail was picked up without difficulty and was followed past Winter's Ranch.

Making a "dry" bivouac for the night, Wellman again took up the chase early the next morning, November 29, 1861. He did not have to go far, for Showalter's party had also bivouacked for the night on Winter's Ranch. At eight-thirty, before they had finished breaking camp, they suddenly found themselves staring at the ugly muzzles of Wellman's carbines. Completely surprised, the party was totally unprepared for a fight.

The two forces were almost evenly matched, for Wellman's patrol consisted of eighteen men, while Showalter's men totalled sixteen. Leaving his men in readiness, Wellman rode forward for a parley. The members of the Showalter group loudly protested that they were peaceful miners, going about their own lawful business. They were going to Sonora to prospect there and were taking a roundabout route to avoid any trouble or friction with the government authorities. Wellman demanded that they accompany him to the camp at Oak Grove (Camp Wright). Most of them agreed, but Showalter and two or three others demurred and showed a readiness to fight. Wellman agreed, upon their demand, that they would be released promptly if there was no evidence against them. After some argument, Showalter agreed to abide by the decision of the majority. His decision may have been influenced by the fortuitous arrival of a strong detachment from Company D, First California Volunteer Infantry, so that the party was hopelessly outnumbered.<sup>15</sup>

Late that night the captors and prisoners (who had not been disarmed) arrived at Camp Wright. The temporary camp commander was

Captain Hugh A. Gorley, First California Volunteer Infantry, of San Francisco. He and Showalter stared hard at each other, and

He [Showalter] began his conversation by saying that my name was familiar to him. I replied that his name was familiar also, as there were families by his name in my native county in Pennsylvania. Our conversation brought out the fact that he was from my native village, and he knew me, as he said, as a "tow-headed boy," while I remembered him as a young man going to school at Madison College.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately for themselves, the members of the party were unable to convince the Union authorities that they were nothing more than peaceful miners. On December 9, 1861, Brigadier General George Wright, the department commander, issued positive orders that the Showalter group was to be held and securely guarded until further orders. The necessity for guarding them strongly received emphasis when Major Rigg reported receiving information, on December 4, that an attempt to release them by force would be made. Further, on December 9, Captain Emil Fritz, of the First California Volunteer Cavalry, reported a rumor, which he believed to be true, that an oath-bound band of seventy-five men was being assembled at El Monte for the express purpose of rescuing Showalter and his companions. Fritz's informant was Clarence E. Bennett, a West Point graduate, who was engaged in farming near San Bernardino.<sup>17</sup>

The suspicion of the Federal authorities was heightened by the fact that except for Showalter himself and two others, every man of the party was a native of the South. Every man, moreover, was equipped with a rifle and two revolvers, and there was a notable lack of the tools and implements that a party of miners would be reasonably expected to carry.

Without exception, all members of the party said that they were perfectly willing to take an oath of allegiance to the Union, and to give a statement regarding himself and his purpose in attempting to leave California. Showalter's own statement is fairly typical of those made by everyone:

I was born in Greene County, Pa.; came to California in 1852; have lived the greater portion of the time in Mariposa County; my occupation is that of a miner; started for Sonora from Virginia City about one month since; intended going to some mines in Los Alamos, Sonora, and if opportunity offered, to go through to Texas or Missouri, if I did not like Sonora; had no organized party whatever;

started from Virginia City with a man by the name of Gilbert; was joined by Crowell at Aurora; Gilbert stopped at Mariposa; taking the trail from Temecula was very much against my wish; a majority of the party were in favor of it, and I acceded to it; am perfectly willing to take the oath of allegiance; am thirty years of age.<sup>18</sup>

Within a few days Major Rigg and the post adjutant devised and administered an iron-clad oath of allegiance to each and every member of the party. Without doubt Showalter and his companions expected to be released at once after taking the oath, but Rigg would not let them go without authority from higher up, and as has been noted, the department commander decided to hold them. Consequently, in spite of taking the oath, a month later they were on their way to Fort Yuma, under heavy guard. In command of the guard was Showalter's old friend, Captain Hugh A. Gorley. Gorley did not let memories of old times in Pennsylvania interfere with his duties, and the prisoners and their escort finally arrived at Fort Yuma after a difficult and disagreeable march across the Mojave Desert. Once at Fort Yuma the prisoners were treated exactly as garrison prisoners, and promptly put to work (under guard) strengthening the defenses of the post.<sup>19</sup>

As a place for confining suspected rebels, Fort Yuma had certain undeniable advantages. The surrounding desert made any attempt at escape almost hopeless. Fugitives would stand little chance of being able to pass through Arizona on their way eastward because of the prowling bands of Apaches. The isolation of the post made it improbable that any writ of *habeas corpus* or other civil process could reach the place without ample warning in advance. To make certain, however, that the captives were not released through interference by the civil courts, Colonel Carleton sent a brief order to Lieutenant Colonel West directing him to disregard any writ that might happen to be brought across the desert.<sup>20</sup>

The prisoners were held at Fort Yuma for several months. In April, 1862, the commander at Fort Yuma was directed to exact an additional oath of allegiance from each man, and shortly after this, the department commander ordered the release of the entire group.

With his release from confinement, Dan Showalter again dropped from sight. In February, 1863, Major David Fergusson, of the First California Volunteer Cavalry, while on a confidential mission in Mexico, obtained information that Showalter and several others had passed

through Chihuahua two months previously. In December of the same year the Carson City *Daily Independent* published a letter from "Henry Carter (Formerly of Jamestown, California, and now First Lieutenant, Twenty-eighth Alabama Regiment, CSA)," in which Carter said, among other items of news, "Dan Showalter, who killed Percy [*sic*] is now in Texas."<sup>21</sup>

The oath which Showalter had been made to take was designed expressly to prevent a man from joining the Confederacy. From the first Colonel Carleton was not optimistic that any oath would have the desired effect, for in his covering letter when he forwarded the signed copies of the oath to the department commander, he said, "I believe they would take any oath to get clear and cross to Arizona and Texas."<sup>22</sup> Dan Showalter may have had such a purpose in mind when he signed, or he may have believed that an oath exacted under duress is not binding. At any rate, he made his way through Mexico to Texas, where he was a total stranger. He was fortunate enough to encounter an acquaintance, Captain George L. Patrick, formerly of Tuolumne, now in the Confederate Army. Showalter enlisted at once in Patrick's company, and as a soldier in that company took part in the defense of Galveston, and was in the engagement at Sabine Pass, when the Confederates captured several Federal ships. His conduct in these fights brought him to the favorable attention of his military superiors, and shortly after he became Lieutenant Colonel Showalter. In command of a cavalry regiment, he saw active service in Indian Territory and along the Arkansas River. In January, 1864, his regiment was transferred from the Arkansas to southern Texas, probably because of the threat caused by the recent Federal capture of Brownsville.<sup>23</sup> Scattered items in the *Official Records* indicate that Showalter's regiment was almost constantly on the move during the early months of 1864, but the information is so fragmentary that it is impossible to form a coherent picture of his actions and activities. In late June, under the command of Colonel John S. Ford, he was in combat against the Federals at an unspecified place, probably near Edinburg, Texas. Colonel Ford, in his report, twice mentioned Colonel Showalter's gallant conduct during the battle.<sup>24</sup>

Most of the information about him during this period has been preserved in a curious way. Upon Showalter's arrival at San Antonio from

the Arkansas, he received a message through Mrs. David S. Terry, wife of the noted duelist who killed Senator Broderick. The message was from Miss Anna Forman, daughter of the former postmaster at Sacramento, and now the commanding officer of the Fourth California Volunteer Infantry. Showalter replied at once, writing to Anna on February 8. On April 3, 1864, a patrol of California volunteers, near Presidio, Texas, killed a Captain Henry Skillman, of the Confederate Army, who was unflatteringly described by Carleton (now a brigadier general) as a "notorious spy." Skillman was a former stage driver, whose knowledge of desert craft and familiarity with the country made him invaluable as a messenger and courier. Among the papers found in his possession was Dan Showalter's letter. It makes strange reading among the dry, factual reports and correspondence of the *Official Records*, for it is a letter written by a young man who was very much in love. After telling of his experiences of the last few months, Showalter concluded by saying that "if I had only twenty years to live, I would give up ten years of that time to see you and talk with you one hour. I may survive this war. If so, we may meet again; but if I should fall, you will have the last kind thought, the last fervent prayer of your devoted friend, Dan Showalter."<sup>25</sup>

Despite his northern birth, Showalter was as fanatical a Confederate as any native Southerner could be. "I am proud to fight, and if necessary, die, with a people who have contended so gallantly for their liberties against such fearful odds. If you could see them as I have . . . you would say with me . . . they are deserving [of their liberty] and can never be conquered." Showalter was convinced that the South would be able to continue the war for years, and rather than yield to the North, the South would "lay waste every field, burn every dwelling, and leave to the invaders no mark of civilization save the ruins of once happy homes, the deserted fields, and the mangled bodies of the slain."<sup>26</sup>

The self-exiled Confederates from California apparently never ceased to hope that their state could be brought into the Confederacy, or at least would contribute heavily in man power. A great deal of wishful thinking convinced many that in California lay a great reservoir of recruits to add to the strength of the Confederate armies—a reservoir that could be tapped without too great an effort. This hopeful belief was

confirmed by the report of a Confederate spy who spent several months in California and Nevada in the summer and early autumn of 1864. The spy, Captain H. Kennedy, reported optimistically on his return to the Confederacy that he found "many true Southern men willing to enlist. . . ." His rosy view of the situation survived even a very hasty departure to avoid capture by the Federal authorities, who had become aware of his presence in California.<sup>27</sup> Even before Kennedy made his adventurous journey to California, a well-known pioneer, Judge Lansford Hastings, visited Richmond and sought an interview with the Confederate President to promote a scheme for obtaining men in California. On February 4, 1864, the Confederate Secretary of War wrote to General E. Kirby Smith, who was in command of Confederate forces west of the Mississippi, informing him that Hastings had been commissioned as a major, and was specifically authorized to raise a force in Arizona, with California as the ultimate objective. Kirby Smith was permitted to export cotton to Mexico for the purpose of raising from ten to twelve thousand dollars in specie to finance Hastings' expedition. The Secretary of War, incidentally, was very doubtful as to Hastings' military qualifications, and suggested the advisability of including Judge David S. Terry as a member of the expedition.<sup>28</sup>

Hastings' scheme was abortive, but there were plenty of hopeful enthusiasts ready to take his place. A Colonel Henry Beaumont wrote to Richmond, urging that he and his brother be authorized to organize an expedition to Arizona and California. Colonel John R. Baylor, who had led the initial Confederate force into New Mexico and Arizona, and who was the Confederate "Territorial Governor of Arizona," wrote to the Secretary of War, stating that a force of about 2,500 men would be able to recover Arizona, and would immediately make available for the Confederacy from 15,000 to 20,000 men from California. Baylor based these figures on estimates given him by Judge Terry and Colonel Dan Showalter.<sup>29</sup> The Secretary of War had no resources available for such an expedition. Jefferson Davis approved the scheme "in principle," but could do no more than direct that Colonel Baylor be consulted further.

As for Dan Showalter, his hopes still lively, and his illusions as to Confederate sympathy on the Pacific Coast undimmed, he proceeded independently of Baylor in an attempt to gain authorization for an inva-

sion of California. On February 14, 1864, within a few days after he had written his impassioned letter to Anna Forman, he was the first signer (and probably the instigator) of a letter addressed to General Kirby Smith:

We propose to take one hundred men under the command of Lieut. Col. Dan Showalter, traveling in detachments of twenty-five men through Mexico, for the ostensible purpose of visiting the late rich gold discovery made in the Territory of Arizona—concentrate our forces at Tucson (at which point a large supply depot has been established, guarded by about one hundred men, from the best information we can get) take that place, and move directly forward to the gold mines between the headwaters of the Salinas and Gila rivers where we are assured that our numbers will be augmented to at least five hundred men, and perhaps many more—thence we march directly on Ft. Yuma, destroy that point and open communication with Southern California, from whence a sufficient number of men can be drawn to sweep the entire Territories east and establish beyond cavil the claim of the Southern Confederacy to the country. . . .

Yours very respectfully, etc.,

Lt. Col. Dan Showalter<sup>80</sup>

[and thirteen other signers].

The signers gave a “solemn pledge” of their lives for the success of the undertaking. In their hopeful enthusiasm they overlooked the inconsistency of their claim that they would be joined by large numbers of men in Arizona, with an earlier statement in their letter—that “few Arizonians and New Mexicans . . . have survived the exigencies of the service.” They also ignored, or were ignorant of, the ruthless thoroughness with which Carleton’s California volunteers had purged Arizona of suspected Confederate sympathizers.

With the Confederacy being bled to death on the battlefields east of the Mississippi, and with the economic resources of the South crumbling away day by day, the higher Confederate authorities could not give too much attention to such a scheme, alluring as it seemed. The twenty thousand dollars in specie which the expedition was estimated to require were utterly beyond the ability of the Confederate treasury to supply. As noted earlier, Jefferson Davis favored such a scheme in principle, but further than that he could not go. The total and final collapse of the Confederacy in April, 1865, put an end to all hopes of adding the Southwest to the Confederacy, or of augmenting the Confederate armies by large numbers of men from California.

Immediately after the surrender of General Kirby Smith's army in Texas, there was an exodus of fanatical die-hards and all others who, for any reason, did not care to submit to the Union. Among those who chose to cross the border was Dan Showalter. He traveled in a party with Judge Granville Oury, formerly of Tucson, and with a spirit kindred to himself, Judge David S. Terry. Shortly before crossing the Rio Grande Showalter was hurt by a fall from his horse and was forced to ride in a vehicle for the rest of the journey. His crippled condition aroused the motherly compassion of Mrs. Oury, and she recorded in her diary that her husband took food, which she had prepared, "over to Col. Showalter, who is badly crippled . . . and is suffering greatly."<sup>81</sup> When Showalter was able to hobble about on crutches, he visited the Ourys' camp frequently. During the next month he endeared himself to Mrs. Oury, and it was with deep regret that she saw him leave the party at Parras, proposing to go to Durango, and thence to Mazatlán. "We will miss him greatly, he is very sociable, spent most of his time with us, is a constant talker and very entertaining." In addition, his evident familiarity with the part of Mexico through which the exiles were traveling added much interest to the journey.<sup>82</sup>

The Ourys expected Showalter to rejoin their party at Guaymas, but apparently he did not do so. Instead, he seems to have remained at Mazatlán. Years later, on October 9, 1881, Mrs. Oury made, as her final entry in her diary, the remark, "Colonel Showalter settled in Guaymas or Mazatlan and was killed by young Mr. Kavanaugh soon after, in self defense. The Colonel had many noble qualities, but fell a victim to his passion for whiskey."<sup>83</sup>

A little more detail as to his death appeared in a frontier newspaper, the *Reese River Reveille*, on March 2, 1866:

By a late arrival from Mazatlan it is learned that Dan Showalter died from the effects of a bullet wound received from the bar tender of his hotel at the Presidio of Mazatlan, while engaged in smashing the furniture of the house during a drunken spree. The bar-tender remonstrated with him, telling him that it was not treating his partner right to thus destroy their common property, to which Showalter replied that he was a gentleman.

"You are not acting like one," said the bar-tender.

Showalter then drew a knife and slapped the face of the latter with it to provoke a fight. The latter drew a pistol and shot him, shattering his right arm. Lock jaw ensued, causing his death.<sup>84</sup>

No one could contend that Dan Showalter, from the perspective of nearly a century after his lifetime, was an important figure in California history. During his life and career, however, he attained a degree of importance as embodying and symbolizing the spirit of opposition to the Union that affected a considerable fraction of the population of the state. In his violence, moreover, he epitomized the wild spirit of the frontier in his times. His career offers a curious and close parallel to that of his friend, Judge David S. Terry. Each killed a man in a duel, and their victims became, in popular view, martyrs to the cause of the Union. Each served in the Confederate Army in Texas, both fled to Mexico rather than submit to the Union, and both met violent deaths. The personal information about Dan Showalter is so fragmentary and sketchy that it is difficult to evaluate him and form a picture of his personality. There can be no question that he possessed qualities of leadership and personal courage in a high degree. His education was above the average for his time and the places where he lived. Affable and sociable with those whom he liked, he was ultimately the victim of inner forces at which one can only guess. His devotion to the cause of the South was passionate and sincere, and its causes can be only surmised, in view of his northern birth and upbringing. One can summarize only by saying that Dan Showalter, Confederate colonel from California, was a fascinating and baffling character, who probably deserved a better fate than a sordid death in a barroom in Mexico.

## NOTES

1. *Journal of the Assembly of California*, 12 Sess., p. 194.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Vol. 50, Part 1, p. 38. Referred to hereafter as *OR*. The information as to Showalter's appearance was obtained from Mr. Arthur Woodward.
4. *Sacramento Union*, May 18, 1861. All details and quotations of the quarrel and duel between Showalter and Piercy are taken from this source.
5. Theodore H. Hittell, *History of California* (4 vols., San Francisco, 1898), IV, p. 279.
6. Zoeth Skinner Eldridge, *History of California* (4 vols., New York, nd), IV, p. 194.

7. OR, Series I, Vol. 34, Part 1, p. 1054.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. 50, Part 1, p. 698.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 685.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 699-700.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 717.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 738.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.
16. Hugh A. Gorley, *The Loyal Californians of 1861; a Paper Prepared and Read Before the California Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, January 31, 1893* (San Francisco, nd), p. 12. James Hadden, *A History of Uniontown* [Pa.] (Akron, Ohio, 1913), pp. 505, 604.
17. OR, Series I, Vol. 50, Part 1, pp. 759-760.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
19. Gorley, *The Loyal Californians of 1861*, p. 14.
20. OR, Series I, Vol. 50, Part 1, p. 781.
21. Carson City *Daily Independent*, December 5, 1863. In the History Room of the Wells Fargo Bank, San Francisco.
22. OR, Series I, Vol. 50, Part 1, p. 763.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 1079-1080.
24. *Ibid.*, Series I, Vol. 34, Part 1, pp. 1054-1056.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, Series I, Vol. 53, pp. 1044-1046.
28. *Ibid.*, Series I, Vol. 41, Part 1, pp. 1009-1011.
29. *Ibid.*, Series IV, Vol. 3, p. 960.
30. Colonel C. C. Smith, U.S. Army, Ret., "Some Unpublished History of the Southwest," *Arizona Historical Review*, IV (July, 1931), pp. 32-33. The letter cited was in Colonel Smith's possession. He was a grandson of Mrs. Oury.
31. *Ibid.* (October, 1931), p. 54.
32. *Ibid.* (April, 1932), p. 65.
33. *Ibid.*, VI (January, 1935), p. 62.
34. Austin, Nevada, *The Reese River Reveille*, March 2, 1866.