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Letter to Capt. W.G. Nelms, December 22, 1895

John Marshall Stone

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December 23, 1895.

My dear Captain:-

Your letter of the 20th. instant has been received, and I inclose such a letter as I wish you to have from me, whether it is such as you would like to have or not. What I say comprises everything that is good and noble in a few words, and it is most gratifying to me to be able to say, conscientiously, that every word conveys the truth.

I am just as busy a man as you ever saw, unless it was sometime when we were preparing to get my arm yanked; that we could not take time even to speak a good word to a friend. I never intend to be that busy, hereafter, but my time is too limited to write a long letter at this time. The Legislature will meet in a few days now - about two weeks - and last night I commenced preparing my last message to that body. I shall step out on the 21st. of January, next, and while I am not specially tired of the service of the State, you can hardly imagine the relief I contemplate. I will then have served the people of Mississippi as Governor nearly twelve years; and longer than any other man ever did, and perhaps much longer than any other ever will. Our constitution now disqualifies a governor to immediately succeed himself, and if I had desired, and could have obtained another nomination and election I was ineligible. I served from 1876 to 1882 and from 1890 to 1896. This with six years in the State Senate, and two years as Railroad Commissioner. It is the service I have given the State since you and I were in the field together in 1865.

I cannot tell you much of the old members of the command. I meet some of them occasionally, but not often. I have not time to write of them now. Poor Reynolds! I went to see him only a day or two before he died. He was cheerful and hopeful then, but went down immediately after I left. Those who have filled prominent positions I suppose are known to you, and I could hardly recall them now without taking more time than I can spare.

Dr. Ward is still at Winona, and doing quite well, I think; but do not know that he is doing anything but practicing his profession. I see him frequently, and he looks just about as he did in the army. He is beginning to age, of course, but is so white any way that his gray does not show so much. I was in Winona a day or two since, but did not see the Doctor. I am sure he would like to hear from you, for he never tires of talking about the war, and the old soldier friends.

Thanking you, My dear Captain, for your loyal friendship, and with my best wishes, now and forever, I am sincerely your friend and comrade,

Capt. Helms.

J. M. Stone