

All this was fifty-five years ago. Since then the world has moved far along. Midway between then and now, our country had an experience that was no military farce, but a terrible reality, a very death-struggle for existence.

Since then the untamed field on the North Hill where we met has become a charming part of a beautiful city. Mansions of wealth and homes of comfort cover its entire extent. But they are not the homes of those who, buoyant with life, and health, and strength, then and there tried to march proudly, keeping step with the "stirring drum." The Governor and his aids, the Colonel and his staff, and all the rank and file, save possibly a very few last remaining leaves upon the tree, have heard their last tattoo upon earth, and now sleep quietly, where no reveille shall ever again disturb their rest.

*Red Oak, Iowa, Dec. 1, 1894.*

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## THE RUSH TO ARMS IN 1861.

BY W. S. MOORE.

The majority of the people of the present generation have no conception of the grandeur of the spectacle presented to the world in April, 1861, in the alacrity with which the patriotic young men of the Nation flew to arms. The knowledge of the events which marked that heroic epoch in our national history possessed by those who have been born within the last thirty-five years is necessarily limited. Time is a great condenser of history, and years hence a brief paragraph may tell the story of the great war between the northern and southern sections of the United States. To those of us who were contemporaneous with that time and took part in the stirring scenes of 1861 to 1865, the lapse of one-third of a century has not even made misty the memory of the rush to arms and the spirit that animated the volunteer.

In 1861 I was a resident of Fairfield, the beautiful county seat of Jefferson county. Stepping into a law office about 8

o'clock on the evening of April 12, I found seated a group of young men discussing the event of the firing on Fort Sumter and the call of the president for 75,000 men to put down the rebellion. Three of them were law students, one was principal of the public school, and all were of high standing in the society of the town. One regiment was the contribution asked from Iowa, and these young men resolved at once to have their names on the roster of that regiment. A roll was then started, and all present signed it, towards the formation of a company of one hundred men, and in twenty-four hours the roll was complete.

But these men were not alone in their promptness in responding to the call. At the same moment that this roll was started a similar movement was inaugurated in every town and city in the State, and the captain of almost every militia company had already tendered the services of his command to the governor. It soon became evident, therefore, that the Fairfield company would not be a factor in the make-up of the 75,000 volunteers for three months. Closely following this call, however, came one for volunteers for three years or during the war. This staggered some of the men for a time. Three years seemed long. Some of them had wives and children to leave behind; others had just married, and felt that they ought not to go; and many of the young men would be compelled to tear themselves away from their sweethearts. But they were not to be thus baffled. An occasional man may have dropped his name from the roll, but memory recalls not one. At all events, in an incredibly short space of time one hundred men were enrolled for three years, officers were elected, and they were ready for departure to the field of conflict. After a few days of training in the manual of arms they were off for Keokuk, to become distinguished as a part of the subsequently illustrious Second Iowa Infantry.

The scene at the depot the morning the company departed for rendezvous at the Gate City had its exact counterpart at many railroad stations all over the country, and will not be forgotten while a witness to it survives. But though vividly

and ineffaceably photographed upon my mind, an attempt at accurate description would necessarily fail. It was a great emotional drama, in which the entire population, covering acres of ground, were actors. The spectacle of one hundred men and mere boys of various ages, from eighteen to forty-two years, inured to the pleasures of home and devoted to the society of family and friends, taking their lives in their hands, leaving behind them all that was dear and sacred, and departing for the tented field, was awe-inspiring and incomprehensible. Stout-hearted men, gentle maidens, lovely women and tender children, were there. All were in tears. The weeping was infectious if not contagious: but the tears were not tears of sorrow—they were the spontaneous outburst of patriotic emotion, sympathy and admiration for the heroic spirit of the departing volunteers.

The fortunes of war dealt kindly with a goodly number of these brave men, harshly with some, and cruelly with others. Several died of wounds, some were killed in battle, and many died of diseases incident to camp life, a mere fragment of them returning to their homes at the close of the war. Of the group of young men referred to as forming the nucleus of the company, the first man to put his name on the roll (Lieutenant George Strong) died at St. Joseph, Mo., in less than two months after being mustered in, his death being the second to occur in the regiment and the first in the company. He was an exceptionally promising young man. At the time of his enlistment he was principal of the Fairfield public school, and was studying law. The Grand Army post at Fairfield perpetuates his name.

The Second Iowa Infantry embraced in its membership all classes and conditions of men in the every day walks of life, and in this regard was similar to any other regiment of volunteers; yet it is perhaps safe to assume that the men in its ranks were more thoroughly representative of the impulsive patriotism developed on the first call to arms than those contributing to the make-up of regiments subsequently enlisted. It was the first regiment that left the State, and was composed

principally of young men, the average age being but twenty-two years. The spirit with which they were endued and the sentiment that received unanimous endorsement by the rank and file, was tersely expressed by General John A. Dix, as follows: "If any man attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him on the spot." Few men in the regiment thought of position in the service higher than that of private soldier, though there were men in every company competent to fill any station in the military or civil service of the country. There was no scramble for office and in the company to which I belonged the offices sought the men who received commissions as the first officers. The oldest man in the company was elected captain, and the first lieutenant enjoyed the distinction of having been the first man to enroll his name. There may have been men in other companies who aspired to official positions in line or field, but in this respect the men of Company E seemed utterly unambitious. President Lincoln was credited with the statement that there were men in the ranks of every regiment fit to be president of the United States, and recent history records the fact that a Second Iowa man was twice nominated for president and made the country vocal with his fiery eloquence.

The only man in the regiment specially known to fame at the time of its organization was its colonel—SAMUEL R. CURTIS—who resigned a seat in Congress to accept the colonelcy of the regiment. Colonel Curtis was a graduate of West Point, and had distinguished himself as an officer in the war with Mexico. He was eminent as a civil engineer, an advocate at the bar, and an orator and statesman. He was too valuable a man to remain long as colonel of a regiment, early rose to the rank of major general, and became one of the most illustrious men in the war. He was a massive man in every sense, and one of the finest appearing military officers I ever saw in the saddle.

*Des Moines, Iowa.*

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