

## GENERAL VANDEVER.

GENERAL WILLIAM VANDEVER, whose portrait embellishes this number of THE ANNALS, is a native of the city of Baltimore, and is just fifty years old to-day, having been born on the 31st day of March, 1817. When he was ten years of age his parents removed, or rather returned, to the city of Philadelphia, their former place of residence, where they remained until young Vandever had grown to man's estate. He received such education as only the public schools of that city afforded. How well he improved the limited facilities which these schools furnished as the foundation of a self-culture, rigidly practiced, his matured life of useful labor and the ability and success with which he has discharged the duties of positions of great responsibilities, requiring thorough knowledge and mental discipline, fully testify.

At the age of twenty-two, *i. e.* in 1839, he emigrated westward, and locating at Rock Island, Ill., he remained there until 1851, when he took up his residence at Dubuque, Iowa. During the twelve years that he was a resident of Illinois, he was for several years engaged in the survey of the public lands, and a part of the time the owner and editor of a paper published at Rock Island, called the *Northwestern Advertiser*.

For the first two years of his residence at Dubuque he was employed in the Surveyor General's office. Afterwards he commenced the practice of the law, to the study of which he had been giving a large portion of his time for the last few years of his residence at Rock Island, continuing and completing his course of study and admitted to the bar after taking up his residence at Dubuque.

He commenced the practice of the law as a partner of the late Hon. Ben M. Samuels, who will long be remembered by the old citizens of the State as one of its most gifted advocates and eloquent public speakers. For a brief period Mr. Vandever discharged the duties of Clerk of the Supreme Court of the State.

In 1858, he was nominated by the Republican party to represent the Second Congressional District in Congress. The canvass was a spirited and close one. His competitor on the stump was his former partner in business, Ben M. Samuels. We recollect well one of the discussions of these parties during that exciting campaign. As an orator, in the accepted sense, Samuels had the decided advantage. In the ready "flow of language," in voice, in gesture, in style, and the indefinable look, air and bearing which form that personal identity comprehended in the word "presence," he had few equals on any forum in the nation. Ingenious in argument, he developed the strong points of his case with great skill. In rhetorical arrangement and expression, there was remarkable finish to his sentences, giving even to his extemporaneous efforts the character of well matured and thoroughly digested speeches. And especially of that magnetism of manner which allures and fastens attention, elicits sympathy and carries a crowd, he was redundantly possessed. All in all, he was a tower of strength to the democratic cause at that day. He was met by his opponent with a cool self-possession which is not without its influence upon an audience, who watch the leaders of a debate, very much as a soldier watches his officer in command, for the clue to the safety of the position. The fine rhetoric of his adversary was met with the potent logic of facts, arranged and marshaled into the combat with great skill, and with telling effect. Whatever the respective merits of the two combatants, or of their respective cause, the democratic cause and candidate were doomed to defeat at the polls, and Mr. Vandever elected. His colleague in the House was the lamented General Samuel R. Curtis—the State then having but two representatives.

In 1860, he was re-elected by nearly ten thousand majority. In 1861, commenced the war of the rebellion. Curtis and Vandever, both offered their services to the government, and being accepted, they both abandoned their seats in congress, to share in the perils of the strife. They both retained their seats, however, until after the extra session of that year.

It was during this session that the disastrous battle of Bull Run was fought. The day after, (the gloomiest, perhaps, in the history of the war) Mr. Vandever rose in his place in the House, and offered a resolution, which is thus mentioned by Greeley in his "American Conflict":

"It is worthy of record, that on this sad day, while Washington, crowded with fugitives from the routed Grand Army, seemed to lie at the mercy of the rebels, Congress legislated calmly and patiently throughout, and the House, on motion of Mr. Vandever, of Iowa, unanimously 'Resolved, That the maintainance of the constitution, the preservation of the union, and the enforcement of the laws, are sacred trusts which must be executed; that no disaster shall discourage us from the most ample performance of this high duty, and that we pledge to the country and to the world, the employment of every resource, national and individual, for the suppression, overthrow and punishment of rebels in arms.'"

Very soon afterward, Mr. Vandever tendered to the War Department, for the service of the Government, a regiment to be recruited by himself, from among his constituents. The offer having been promptly accepted by Secretary Cameron, he set about raising his men without delay. Authority was subsequently given to add an artillery company. This work was soon accomplished, and, taking command in person, Col. Vandever reported at St. Louis with the 9th Iowa Infantry Vols., in the latter part of September, accompanied also by the 3d Iowa Battery, better known as Hayden's, or the Dubuque Battery. In 1862, he accompanied General Curtis, in his south-western campaign through Missouri and Arkansas—commanded a brigade, and bore a conspicuous part in the famous battle of Pea Ridge, and was specially mentioned for gallantry in his report. In this action the 9th Iowa, as well as the Battery accompanying it, behaved with signal bravery and determination. The 9th lost two hundred and forty-eight in killed and wounded, after having made on the preceding day a march of forty-two miles.

In November, 1862, Col. Vandever was commissioned Brigadier General—participated in the battle of Arkansas Post; and, afterward, having been transferred, by request of General Curtis, to the Department of Missouri, and placed in command of the second Division of the Old Army, was active in driving the enemy from South Eastern Missouri across the St. Francis River.

In 1863, he took part in the siege of Vicksburg, and, after the capture of that stronghold, joined in an expedition to Yazoo City. During the action at this place, the General had a remarkable escape from death, being one of a few who escaped the destruction of the boat DeKalb, which was blown up by striking a torpedo in the river.

Returning from Yazoo City, his next field of service, was the Department of the Gulf—accompanying Gen. Banks, in his first expedition to Texas—participating in the capture of Brownsville, on the Rio Grande.

From Texas, he returned in December, and reported to Gen. Grant at Nashville—served with Grant, and afterwards with Sherman, on the line of operations to Atlanta, and subsequently from Savannah to Richmond. At the battle of Bentonville, North Carolina, the General won distinction, and for it, afterwards, a brevet Major-Generalship—having held an important position against fearful odds of numbers and a furious assault, during a desperate and sudden move of Joe Johnston, by which he hurled his whole force against Sherman's left wing, thereby helping materially to save that portion of the army from disaster.

He was mustered out of the U. S. service in September, 1865, having served over four years. There are men who have won a wider renown—more rapid promotions, and louder applause, for their exploits during the war of the rebellion—but few there are, who can show a worthier record for arduous and faithful service—of bravery in battle, or the manifestations of a truer patriotism, or of a more sincere devotion to the cause of the Union from first to last, than General Vandever.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.