

## OBITUARY.

Died December 26th, 1866, at Council Bluffs, Iowa, while engaged in official duty, SAMUEL RYAN CURTIS, United States Pacific Railroad Commissioner, and first General of volunteers from Iowa. He was born in Ohio February 3d, 1807, and graduated at West Point July 1st, 1831. After a brief service in Arkansas as Brevet 2d Lieutenant in the 7th U. S. Infantry, he resigned to engage as a civil engineer, both on the National Road, and as Chief of the Muskingum River Improvement in his native State, where he also commanded various military bodies, and engaged in the practice of the law. At the opening of the Mexican war he was made Adjutant General of Ohio, and soon afterwards Colonel of the 3d Ohio Volunteers. In Mexico he served with distinction, with his regiment, as military governor of conquered cities, and on the staff of General Wool. In 1847, he removed to Keokuk, Iowa, always afterwards his home. In Iowa he was long Chief Engineer of the Des Moines River Improvement, and here also he practiced law. From 1850 to 1853, he was Chief Engineer of St. Louis City, where he left a lasting monument of his abilities by connecting Bloody Island with the Illinois shore, thus saving St. Louis from becoming an inland town. Subsequently he acted as Engineer for various railroads through Indiana, Illinois and Iowa, and for these companies in 1853, he indicated the line of a Central Pacific Railroad, as subsequently adopted. As an original republican, he was thrice elected to Congress from the 1st Congressional District of Iowa, serving in the 35th, 36th, and 37th Congress. Here he was prominent in the lower house, a member of the committee on military affairs, and chairman of the committee on the Pacific Railroad. He introduced a bill to construct this road on a plan substantially similar to

the routes since adopted. He represented Iowa in the great "Peace Conference," which failed to prevent the greatest of civil wars. On the fall of Sumpter, he left his home, and was one of the first to arrive in Washington, piloting the New York 7th regiment to the city as volunteer aid to its commander. Returning he was unanimously elected Colonel of the 2d Iowa Infantry, and leading his regiment, the first from Iowa to follow the flag beyond the State boundary, he seized the line of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad, thus virtually capturing half the great State of Missouri, then in incipient rebellion. Having accomplished this movement, he hastened to attend the extra session of Congress called July 4th, 1861, and while in attendance was present unofficially at Bull Run, where he with others in vain endeavored to turn defeat into victory. Resigning his seat in Congress, he was made a Brigadier General from May 17th, 1861, and repaired to St. Louis, where under Fremont he organized the "camp of instruction" first at Jefferson and afterwards at Benton Barracks. During the disturbance incidental to the removal of Fremont, he was intrusted by President Lincoln with some of the most painful and delicate duties. Under Halleck he first held the important command of the St. Louis District. On December 26th, 1861, five years previous to the day of his death, he assumed at Rolla, Mo., the command of those troops whose glorious victory at Pea Ridge, as the "Army of the South-west," first made his name immortal in military history. Briefly he led this army of from ten to twenty thousand men, through a half settled hostile territory, a difficult eight months march of five hundred miles, winning the glorious victory of Pea Ridge and many lesser triumphs, and arriving safely on the banks of the Mississippi at Helena, Ark., July 14th, 1862, having been promoted Major General in March 1862. Not resting from

his labors, during a brief leave of absence he acted as President of that Pacific Railroad Convention at Chicago, which actually inaugurated the road now being constructed. He was hastily ordered from Chicago to assume command of the Department of the Missouri Sept. 24th, 1862. This command he held for eight months during the most gloomy period of the war. His position was one of vast responsibility and importance, in which every duty was discharged to the satisfaction of the patriotic North. His command extended over Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, and the Indian territory, and the armies of the "South-west," the "Frontier," and of "South-east Missouri." It included probably over one hundred thousand soldiers warring with rebels, guerrillas, and Indians. Under him then were won the victories of "Cane Hill," "Old Fort Wayne," "Prairie Grove," "Springfield," "Hartsville," "Cape Girardeau," "Fort Smith," "Van Buren," and skirmishes innumerable. At the end of his eight months administration, he was removed by President Lincoln at the instance of a clique of proslavery and rebel sympathizing Missouri politicians, "not for any fault," but in the vain hope that to remove a true soldier would convert the half-fledged rebels of Missouri to loyalty. This was *the* mistake of Mr. Lincoln's political career. The Union party condemned the act, and it prevented Mr. Lincoln's renomination from being unanimous on the first ballot.

On January 1st, 1864, Gen. Curtis was assigned to the Department of Kansas, including all of his old territorial command except Missouri and Arkansas. His troops were few and scattered, fighting guerrillas on the Missouri border, and Indians over the wide domain of the West. In the fall of the year he rallied his volunteer troops, about three thousand strong, and the Kansas militia as the "Army of the Border," and in a campaign of

fourteen days, assisted by a few troops from Gen. Pleasanton, drove the army of his old adversary, Price, twenty or thirty thousand strong, three hundred and fifty miles from Kansas City to the Arkansas river, fighting the battles of "Little Blue," "Big Blue," "Westport," "Marion des Cygnes," "Osage," "Charlot," and "Newtonia." This was the last return of Price to Missouri. He suffered a terrible and complete rout, with an admitted loss of over ten thousand.

On Feb. 16th, 1865, Gen. Curtis assumed command of the Department of the North-west, including Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Decotah, and all north of Nebraska.— This department was dissolved July 26th, 1865. In the fall of 1865 the General went far up the Missouri as Commissioner to treat with the Indians, and in this capacity effected several important treaties. He was also appointed United States Commissioner to inspect the Union Pacific Railroad. He had just completed an inspection of the last thirty-five miles, terminating three hundred and five miles west of the Missouri river, signed the report at Omaha, walked over the Missouri river on the ice, stepped into a carriage in apparent perfect health, and died within half a mile of the river bank. From the residence of his friend Col. Nutt, at Council Bluffs, his remains were brought to their last resting place in Keokuk, escorted by Gen. J. H. Simpson and Dr. Wm. White, his fellow Pacific Railroad Commissioners, Maj. L. S. Bent, of the Pacific Railroad, Cols. W. F. Sapp and H. C. Nutt of Council Bluffs, and Col. R. H. Hunt, of his former staff.

Such are the briefly recited facts of a single life, which developed, would fill volumes of the history of our country.

His administrative abilities were great, and as an Engineer, he was the father of the Pacific Railroad. It had

been for years an idea. He gave the idea shape and actual existence. Its accomplishment was the great object of his public life, and his last act was in its behalf. To-day the locomotive whistles half way from the Missouri to the Rocky Mountains, calling in vain for the Pathfinder of civilization who marked its track over the wide and desolate plains.

The General who never suffered defeat is laid low.— The generous gallant soldier, the kind genial friend of all who knew him, sleeps peacefully his last sleep. The soul of a true christian gentleman has gone from us, let us hope, to dwell with his martyred soldier son and others dear to him, in unending heaven.

“ Thus star by star declines,  
Till all are passed away,  
As morning high and higher shines,  
To pure and perfect day;  
Nor sink those stars in empty night—  
They hide themselves in heaven's own light.”

S. P. C.

#### MILITARY HISTORY OF IOWA FROM 1861 TO 1866.

This work, now in process of preparation by A. P. Wood, Esq., promises to be of rare merit, and to supply a want very much felt, that of a minute and accurate history, and embracing in one volume, all the transactions of the State concerning the war, the action of the State government, and of the people and organizations of the people within its borders, and of its troops in the field.

Most of the books written about the war have been rapidly and hastily written, and consequently with a want of full and accurate material. For this reason have occurred omissions of facts unobscured, yet important in their relation to others of greater significance, thereby rendering the record more or less incomplete. A comprehensive, reliable work, that shall contain all the truths of the services of the men and organizations of the State that were given to their country

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