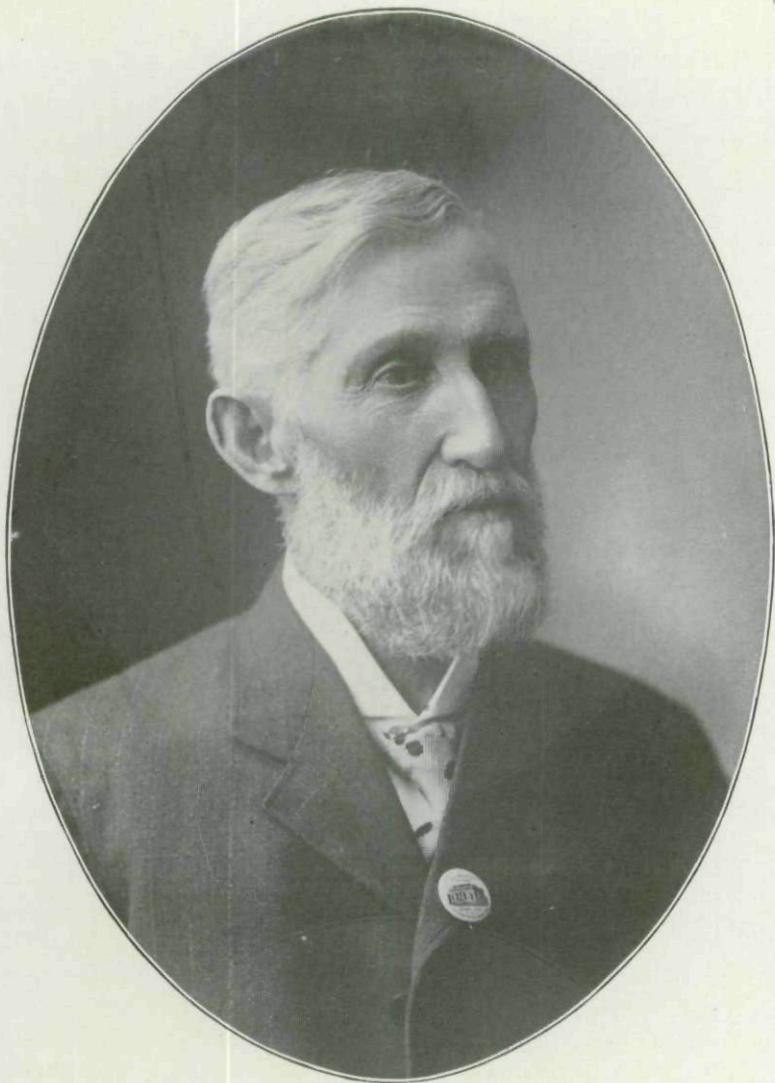


ANNALS OF IOWA.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

THE BATTLE OF PLEASANT HILL.

While we have had in previous numbers partial accounts of that disastrous affair, it has still seemed desirable that these pages should contain further details—a more minute survey of the field of battle, its incidents and its surroundings. This we have at last secured in our leading article. It is from the pen of Mr. Solon F. Benson, a man who left an arm to be buried from the field hospital. He is now, after all these years, a well-known, prosperous banker, in the town of Pierson, Woodbury Co., Iowa. He was mustered into the U. S. service at Camp Franklin, Dubuque, on the 30th day of August, 1862, as First Corporal of Co. F, 32d Iowa Infantry, and afterwards promoted to Fourth Sergeant. He was badly wounded at the battle of Pleasant Hill, La., April 9, 1864, and was captured by the Confederates, remaining a prisoner of war several months. With others he was finally exchanged and mustered out of the service for disability, at Davenport, Iowa, October 8, 1864. He therefore saw hard service, becoming intimately acquainted with the destitution and suffering of hospital life within the enemy's lines. Mr. Benson's thrilling experiences enable him to write from full knowledge. More than this, he has devoted years to a study of the Red River Campaign and the fields of battle in which it culminated on the 8th and 9th days of April, 1864. He has spent some time at Pleasant Hill, and in its vicinity, interviewing old settlers who were there during the clash of arms, meeting also many southern soldiers who were in the desperate battle. He found them not unfriendly, and willing to aid him in his quest for information. He has, therefore, been able to include many details, personal and otherwise, which had escaped observation. Such articles are by far the best materials for



SOLON F. BENSON.

First Corporal, and later, 4th Sergeant Company F, Thirty-second Iowa Infantry.
Wounded at the battle of Pleasant Hill, La., April 9, 1864.

history. Some of the memorable descriptions of the historic charge at Balaklava, in the Crimean war, were written long years afterwards, by men who participated in that wild rout. In like manner soldiers of the civil war, both Union and Confederate, are now recording many facts not disclosed by the official reports and which have not come within the knowledge of historians. It is good work in this direction that has been performed by Sergeant Benson. In the days succeeding the battles, eastern troops seemed to have won all the glory. In fact, the loss of one of their officers, a splendid soldier, who had been a commanding figure in the politics or statesmanship of New York, for a time overshadowed every other. This was so palpable that it excited comment by western soldiers who were not at all inclined to be ungenerous or jealous.

Three Iowa regiments took part in the battle of Pleasant Hill—the 14th Infantry, Col. Wm. T. Shaw; the 27th, Col. James I. Gilbert, and the 32d, Col. John Scott. At this time the 14th Infantry was commanded by Lt. Col. J. H. Newbold, who was killed in the battle. Colonel Shaw was in command of the brigade. It was known in the reports as "Shaw's Brigade."

The 14th was recruited in the following counties: Jones, Johnson, Jasper, Scott, Tama, Dubuque, Chickasaw, Bremer, Henry, Lee, Davis, Van Buren, Decatur, Louisa, Marion, Linn, Des Moines and Iowa.

The 27th was mainly from the counties of Allamakee, Buchanan, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Floyd and Mitchell.

Coming from a more sparsely settled region, the 32d Infantry had men enlisted from the following counties: Boone, Story, Marshall, Grundy, Hardin, Hamilton, Webster, Calhoun, Pocahontas, Humboldt, Wright, Franklin, Butler, Bremer, Cerro Gordo, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Worth and Winnebago.

More than forty Iowa counties were represented in these three regiments at Pleasant Hill.

The casualties in the Iowa regiments are given in Fox's "Regimental Losses in the American Civil War," as follows:

The Fourteenth Infantry (Col. William T. Shaw), killed, 13; wounded, 55; missing and prisoners, 14. Total, 82.

The Twenty-seventh Infantry (Col. James I. Gilbert), killed, 4; wounded, 70; missing, 14. Total, 88. It seems almost a discrepancy that only 4 were killed in the 27th Infantry against a list of 70 wounded—but that is the official report.

The Thirty-second Infantry (Col. John Scott), killed, 33; wounded, 117; missing and prisoners, 56. Total, 206.

The total of killed, wounded and missing in the three Iowa regiments was 380.

Gen. A. J. Smith—"Old A. J.," as he was familiarly called by the Iowa men whom he led on many bloody fields—commanded detachments of the 16th and 17th Army Corps on the Red River Expedition. Col. Wm. T. Shaw's brigade belonged to the 16th Corps, and was therefore a part of Gen. Smith's command. To no commander have the Iowa soldiers looked back with greater affection and pride than to Gen. A. J. Smith. He graduated from West Point in 1838 and saw active service on our frontiers, in Mexico and the civil war. He rose to the rank of Major General of Volunteers and Colonel of the 7th Regular Cavalry. He resigned from the regular army May 6, 1869. Gen. Grant appointed him postmaster of St. Louis, April 3, 1869. He died June 30, 1897. His record fills two pages of Gen. Cullum's Biographical Register of West Point. It has seldom been equalled in the annals of active service.

Mr. Benson has kindly procured three other articles which we take pleasure in publishing in connection with his own. They form a very fitting addition to his work, and may be described or summarized as follows:

Reminiscences of the Battle of Pleasant Hill, by Henry H. Childers, a lawyer of New York, who then lived in Pleasant Hill, and who writes a very readable article from a citizen's standpoint, and being of the south, it is quite valuable on account of the opposite views it reflects. Mr. Childers is a facile and pleasing writer and the last of the Childers name now living.

The next is that of Col. Wm. H. Heath, of the 33d Mo. Infantry, which was brigaded with the 35th Iowa and fought

in the reserves with Gen. J. A. Mower. Mr. Heath's article lets some light into the inner military circles of that place and time which will be of interest to many readers. It does not cover much of the history, but is quite lucid as to his little corner of the field.

Another article is the narrative of the escape of Private Ben Van Dyke, of the 14th Iowa, which is quite romantic and interesting. This old soldier is now living in Oklahoma.

NOTE.—Articles on the Battle of Pleasant Hill, by Col. William T. Shaw, ex-Judge Charles T. Granger, and Capt. Thomas C. McCall, may be found in Vol. III, 3d series, of *THE ANNALS OF IOWA*, pp. 401-423. See also pp. 465-468 of the same volume for references to Col. Shaw. An article by Hon. A. J. Barkley, in the same volume, pp. 23-31, should also be read in this connection.

THE LETTERS AND PAPERS OF ROBERT LUCAS.

For many years the lack of original source material bearing upon the life and political activities of the first Governor of the Territory of Iowa has been the despair of collectors and students of Iowa history. Indeed, after many futile efforts to discover the precious manuscripts, the story that the letters and papers of Robert Lucas had long ago been accidentally destroyed by fire had come to be accepted as fact. This was the situation when in October, 1905, Mr. John C. Parish, a graduate student at the State University of Iowa, elected to write a thesis on "Robert Lucas, Governor of the Territory of Iowa."

Mr. Parish, of course, soon found himself embarrassed by the lack of source material. However, after conference with Prof. Benj. F. Shambaugh (under whose direction the thesis was being prepared) it was decided to make a thorough search for the missing letters and papers. Sometime in November, 1905, Professor Shambaugh called upon Robert Lucas, a grandson of Governor Lucas, and enlisted his interest in the renewed effort to bring to light the material that was supposed to be lost or destroyed. The first document discovered through co-operation with the grandson was the manuscript copy of the *Executive Journal of Iowa* for 1838-1841, which contains

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