



Yours Very Truly
W. H. Kinsman

WILLIAM H. KINSMAN,

First lieutenant and captain of Co. B, Fourth Iowa Infantry, and lieutenant-colonel and colonel of the Twenty-third Iowa Infantry, who was killed at the battle of Black River Bridge, Mississippi, May 17, 1863.

ANNALS OF IOWA.

VOL. V, No. 4.

DES MOINES, IOWA, JANUARY, 1902.

3D SERIES.

COLONEL WILLIAM H. KINSMAN.

BY GENERAL GRENVILLE M. DODGE.

William H. Kinsman was born in Nova Scotia, Kings County, in the town of Cornwallis, in 1834. His father was Theodorus Kinsman, a small farmer, and his mother the daughter of an old sea captain. Young Kinsman went to sea, shipping as cabin boy at the age of 15. He remained at sea for over four years, saving his money. Soon after his return home he came to Columbia County, N. Y., where he attended an academy for two years, and then went to Cleveland, Ohio, where he engaged in writing local editorials for a newspaper, attending a law school during the time he remained in that city, in which he took a full course of lectures. In the spring of 1858 he entered the law office of Clinton & Baldwin, Council Bluffs, to complete his studies. On the motion of Judge Baldwin he was admitted to practice at the October term, 1858.

In 1859 he caught the gold fever, and took his knapsack and all the rations he could carry, and tramped from Council Bluffs to Pike's Peak, some six hundred or more miles, where he engaged in any kind of labor he could find to do. He located a placer mine, which he worked for a short time. During his tramp to and stay in Colorado, he corresponded with *The Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, writing very sensible, practical letters, under the *nom de plume* of "Jack Taffrail". In the winter of 1859 he returned to Council Bluffs, and taught a short term of school in that city. He then visited Washington City as the correspondent of sundry news-

papers, but remained only a few months. Returning to Council Bluffs, he formed a co-partnership with the Hon. D. C. Bloomer. In July, 1860, he commenced the practice of his profession.

I first became acquainted with Kinsman when he entered the law office of Clinton & Baldwin. I soon discovered he was a young man of energy, intelligence and great ambition, and that he took a lively part in political and all other matters that interested the city and State. I induced him to join the Council Bluffs Guards, which he entered as a private, taking a great interest in the Company. His stay with them, of course, was short, but as soon as he returned to Council Bluffs in 1860 he again joined, and, if I recollect rightly, was made second lieutenant. It was uphill work maintaining an independent military company of fifty or more members in a small town, without any aid from the State, or local encouragement whatever. The company was kept alive through patriotism and the desire of those who belonged to it to become drilled and efficient soldiers. It took a good deal of urging to get many young men to join the company, as they had to furnish their own uniforms, which many of them could not afford to do, and many of the older citizens, instead of encouraging, opposed it. It was the only company in the western part of the State. Perhaps there was one, certainly not more than two, in the eastern part of the State. The effort was looked upon as foolish, and it was difficult to raise funds necessary to maintain the company. Kinsman, in his enthusiasm, induced many to join it.

In the political campaign of 1860 Kinsman was also very active. It fell to my lot to take part in the thorough organization of the Republican side of politics on the Missouri slope. The party there was unorganized; in fact, a Republican was looked upon rather as an outlaw than a citizen, as that portion of Iowa was settled mostly from the south and by the Mormons. The Baldwins, Mr. Bloomer, Kinsman and other prominent citizens, took an active part in the cam-

paign, thus giving us a creditable standing. Kinsman was very aggressive and got into personal conflicts, saying things that brought upon him considerable criticism. He was absolutely devoted to me, and ready to do anything I asked him, no matter what the result might be, or the consequences to himself, and I therefore became very much attached to him before the war.

In 1861, as soon as it became evident that the South would secede, I called the Council Bluffs Guards together, and informed them that in case of war I proposed to take part, and that I thought it was our duty to make known our decision in the matter, also to offer our services to the Governor. Kinsman very eloquently seconded my little talk, being aggressive and determined, and absolutely demanding of every loyal person present that he take up arms for his government. When the vote was taken the entire company authorized me to offer their services to the Governor, and I think Kinsman was about the happiest man at their action that I ever met. This, I think, was the first company offered to the Governor, although it is possible that one in the eastern part of the State was offered first. The records show that the Governor declined to accept us, stating that as it was the only company in western Iowa, and located near two frontiers, Missouri on the south and the Indians on the north and west, he felt that the settlers there needed its protection. The action of the Governor induced me to offer my services personally to the United States government, being determined to enter the service. Learning this the Governor placed me on his staff, and sent me on special duty to Washington and other places. When I left the Bluffs I promised the company, especially Kinsman, that I would use all my endeavors to have it accepted as part of one of the regiments being raised in the State. As soon as I was made Colonel, and authorized to raise the 4th Iowa, I immediately notified Lieuts. Craig and Kinsman, and gave them authority to fill out the roll for Company B and recruit it to its full strength. In a

short time I heard that they had it full, and when I returned to the Bluffs the company was ready to be mustered in. Kinsman was mustered with his company (B) as second lieutenant, but soon rose to become its captain, the first lieutenant, P. A. Wheeler having been made regimental quartermaster, and Captain S. H. Craig, on account of physical disability, having been compelled to resign. Kinsman was promoted to the captaincy October 10, 1861, at Rolla, Missouri. He was a very efficient officer, very sanguine, and rather restive under strict discipline. He thought if a soldier could shoulder a musket and shoot it, that was about all that should be required of him. He had not then learned what was necessary to prepare a man for battle, and he felt that my severe drilling and disciplining of the regiment was uncalled for, as did most of the regiment; but none of the men ever protested openly. Kinsman, who probably was as near or nearer to me than any other man in the regiment, often talked to me about it, and always arrived at the conclusion that I must be right, but still he could not understand the necessity. He moved along in the campaign from Rolla to Pea Ridge, doing his full duty, and always anxious to aid me. I could call upon him for any work, whether it was that of a soldier, clerk or correspondent, and I think he watched me more carefully and took more interest in me than I did in myself. He could not well stand the slow movements of Fremont, or the great delay in obtaining the proper equipment, clothing, etc., for the regiment. He wanted to take the short road to everything, which, of course, would have been the long one. In the preliminary fights on our march south, up to the great battle of Pea Ridge, I noticed that he was very active, very anxious to get to the front, and that the sound of a cannon or a gun stirred him immediately.

During all this time he kept in correspondence with the home local paper, *The Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, giving every movement, every detail and every item that would be of interest to the people at home. He was especially sympa-

thetic over the great amount of sickness and the many deaths that occurred in the regiment at Rolla. The 4th Iowa was mostly made up of country boys, and they had almost every known disease while in camp that winter at Rolla. At one time nearly half the regiment was down.

At the battle of Pea Ridge I was instructed to make a detail of three companies to hold the extreme left of Col. Carr's division, which was the Pea Ridge mountain. This ridge divided Gen. Curtis' army, Col. Carr's division occupying ground to the east and north of the mountain and facing Gen. Price's army—Gen. Davis with his division occupying the west and south sides of the mountain, fronting Gen. Van Dorn. This mountain made a division of Van Dorn's army, and he made a fatal mistake in dividing his force and sending part under Price to attack our rear, giving us the short interior line, while his line was so long and his divisions so far apart that he could not reinforce either division of his army by details from another. They were not in close touch throughout the battle. Van Dorn's army was fully double that of Curtis, and if he had attacked with his whole force from the west, there is no doubt that we would have had a much harder struggle and probably a different result. As that detail was to be away from me, out of my reach, and it was necessary to depend upon the judgment of the officer commanding, I selected Capt. Kinsman with his own company and two companies of the 24th Missouri. Kinsman in his report says that his command was stretched out across the south end of the mountain as skirmishers, and the enemy thought they were a whole regiment, and when opposed they were opposed only by skirmishers. They held their position throughout the first day and had only one man wounded. Going over their front the next day he found eleven dead, shot with musket balls. There were some Indians with the enemy who shot arrows. Like all the rest of the officers and men of the 4th, he had no sleep for the two nights. I find in my official report the following on his action that day:

Company B, under Capt. Kinsman, with two companies of the 24th Missouri, were on the 7th ordered to the extreme left of the division, to hold our left flank and check the enemy upon the high hill—Pea Ridge. He did this very effectively that day and rendered very efficient service.

He joined the regiment again about 5 o'clock that evening and took part in the final charge that day ordered by Gen. Curtis in person. Gen. Curtis speaks of this charge as follows:

As I came up the 4th Iowa was falling back for cartridges, in line, dressing on their colors, in perfect order. Supposing with my reinforcements I could entirely regain our lost ground, I ordered the regiment to halt and face about. Col. Dodge came up, explaining the want of cartridges, and informed of my purpose, he ordered a bayonet charge, and they moved again with steady nerve to their former position, where the gallant 9th was ready to support them. These two regiments won imperishable fame.

The 4th Iowa had held its position all day, but the 2d brigade posted at Elkhorn tavern had been driven back early in the afternoon leaving my brigade unsupported on either flank, and the enemy had passed clear around me and into my rear, and I did not discover it until out of ammunition. My adjutant, Gen. James A. Williamson, in going for ammunition ran into a rebel regiment in my rear, where the 1st brigade had been posted. This, of course, forced me to withdraw my brigade and join our line in our rear, and it was while on this movement that I met Gen. Curtis, and the action described in his report took place. The regiment heard the conversation between Gen. Curtis and myself, and when I gave the order they started as one man, cheering, and regained our former position, but the enemy had retired from the field in our front.

After this battle Capt. Kinsman came to me and called my attention to the fact that the regiment next morning was intact, with not a man missing except its killed and wounded, and in a very friendly and complimentary way said that he now appreciated all the work they had had to do in the past year, and what it meant. In fact the whole 4th Iowa learned then the value of discipline and drill. They saw other regiments, when they lost their officers, melt away, but the 4th Iowa, with

not a field officer left, never had a straggler. As I left the regiment soon after the battle of Pea Ridge, I had no further personal contact with Kinsman, though he kept up an occasional correspondence with me, showing a great regard for and interest in me until his death. Soon after I left the regiment, upon my application, he was made an Assistant Adjutant General, it being my intention to place him on my staff, but he declined this, and December 1, 1862, accepted a commission as Lieut.-Colonel of the 23d Iowa Infantry. I have no personal knowledge of his services in that regiment, except as gathered from his letters. He unfortunately had a difference with his brigade commander, Gen. Davidson, when they were in Missouri. It came from his allowing his men to forage when they had been without rations for several days on the march to West Plains, Mo. In February, 1863, he was summoned before a court martial, which convened in St. Louis in March, and did not return to his regiment for duty until after it had reached Raymond on the march to Jackson. This was a great disappointment and regret, and he felt it very keenly, and it no doubt was the cause of his determination, when he rejoined the regiment, to atone for it by his daring and bravery, as shown in the battles that followed. Concerning his services with the 23d regiment, I take the liberty of quoting a letter from a chum of his before the war, who was a school teacher, correspondent and lawyer, like himself, and who was his comrade in the 23d, and whose brother was a member of Capt. Kinsman's company, B, 4th Iowa—Lieut. J. A. Straight. He writes:

On the death of Col. Wm. Dewey in December, 1862, Lieut.-Col. Kinsman was promoted to the colonelcy, and became the idol of the regiment. He never had an enemy in the organization. A most thorough disciplinarian, and a hale and hearty friend to every soldier, he, of course, was popular. He always led his boys—never followed. In a long and exceedingly hard marching campaign in Missouri, in the winter of 1862-3, owing to the distance from supplies and no forage or supplies in the sparsely settled country, the regiment was on slim rations for over two weeks, and reduced to parched corn for two or three days. Some of the Co. E boys discovered some hogs near camp and they were captured, also a very poor cow, which

went into the camp kettles. Gen. Davidson sent for Col. Kinsman and said some very wrathful things about his Iowa boys, and their jayhawking ways, which Kinsman resented with such fervor that Gen. Davidson ordered him under arrest, and on the return of the command to Arcadia, Mo., he was called before a court martial at St. Louis in March, and after a dragging trial of two weeks or longer he was restored to duty, the sentence, as I now recollect, being a reprimand by Gen. Curtis for conduct unbecoming a subordinate officer. The regiment had gone down to Vicksburg, and Col. Kinsman rejoined it while on the march from Bruinsburg, Miss., to Jackson, the first week in May, 1863, near the battlefield of Port Gibson, in which his regiment had taken a prominent part. He marched with the regiment through mud and slush to Jackson, commanded it at Champion Hill, where they captured many prisoners by a succession of charges under heavy artillery fire, and double-quickened from Champion Hill battleground to Edwards' Station, where we bivouacked the night of May 16, 1863.

That night, while the dashing rain was drenching us to the skin, and we huddled close together, we talked long after the middle of the night, and he said, "I have orders to march at daylight and attack the enemy (Johnnies) whenever and wherever we find them. I may be killed but if I live and the 23d will follow me, and I know it will, we will show the people at home (in Iowa) that it is one of the best and bravest regiments that ever left the State, and I shall wear a star. But something tells me that I shall be severely wounded, and I want you, if I should be, to see that my sword and watch and other things are sent to Mr. Bloomer, who will know what to do with them;" and while resting next morning under the river bank, to which point he had been ordered by Gen. Lawler, brigade commander, he again said to me: "I expect to be shot down right up on this bank," pointing behind him to the high bank which sheltered us, but added in a tone of voice heard for several feet around us, "but the 23d will get there just the same—don't stop for the dead and wounded; you must take those breastworks." The 23d was lying with bayonets fixed, and loaded guns, stripped to the lightest running weight, under the bank of Black River, which at that point coursed east and west. Company A was on the right wing, and had orders, at a given signal, to mount the bank without firing a gun and double-quick across an open cotton-field to a point in the breastworks about 500 yards distant, where a bayou some 20 yards wide passed through the line of rifle-pits. This subjected the regiment to a flank and enfilading fire from Generals French and Bowen's Missouri divisions, which occupied the line of field works on our right flank. From the time we mounted the bank we were subjected to a murderous fire from 6,000 veteran Missouri and Arkansas troops, and the artillery fire of 12 guns in our front supported by two brigades of Tennesseans and Alabamians. The order of Col. Kinsman was by signal (removing his hat), and he was stripped of everything except his sword-belt and revolver, ready to mount the bank, which was a perpendicular rise of four to five feet, and when the order from Gen. Lawler came, without a moment's hesitation he raised his

hat and was the first man to mount the bank, the balance of his regiment following an instant later. There was no noise or confusion; every man knew what was expected of him, and not an order was issued. The regiment formed a passable line and moved off on a double-quick without firing a gun. The first volley fired from the works on our right found Col. Kinsman about 30 feet from the top of the bank. He had turned around facing the regiment as he was aligning it by motions, and urging it forward, and he was struck with a minie ball in the left side, piercing the sword-belt, near the center of the belt, and fell, turning completely around. I stopped by him a minute or less, gave him a canteen of coffee, and some cotton to staunch his wound, and left him lying in a cotton row, which was a slight protection from the bullets of the enemy, but he impatiently ordered me to leave him and go to the regiment. I overtook the regiment as it was wading across the bayou, running over ground strewn with the wounded and dead of my regiment. As we were firing our first volley into the enemy after gaining the rifle pits, Col. Kinsman came rushing by us, shouting, "Give 'em hell, boys!" waving his naked sword and looking very pale, as if he were making a death struggle with his wound. The enemy was retreating pell mell in great disorder, and the very last volley I can remember as fired by them in our direction caught our colonel once more while he was shouting on the top of the enemy's rifle pits—this time on the right side and about two inches higher than the first shot, both shots having passed through his body and out. He fell upon the enemy's breast-works, and as they had ceased firing and were surrendering to our forces all along the line, and the balance of our division were passing over the breast-works to cut off the retreat across the river, several of the slightly wounded members of the 23d gathered around him. He was tenderly borne to the shade of a tree close by until stretchers could be procured, when he was carried to the hospital tent near the railroad track in the rear of Gen. Hovey's division. He was shot the second time about 11 A. M. and it was between 12 and 1 P. M. when he was examined by the surgeons at the hospital tent or tree, and during this time he shook hands with the boys as they came to see him, asking after the wounded, and when told of Sutler John Lyon having been killed, he said, "I am so sorry; I told him not to go with the boys, but he was a brave man and would go." When the surgeons told him he had only a slim chance to live, he said, "I'll take that chance, as I don't want to leave my brave boys," and then added, "didn't they surprise the Johnny-rebs? and didn't you see them run up the cotton-batting on their bayonets?" and thus he talked at times as the pain increased. Finally, about midnight the 17th of May, he began to grow worse, and about 10 A. M. next day passed away. He asked us to bury him under the live oak tree, where he was lying on a cot under a tent-fly, and on the evening of the 18th of May, 1863, about sundown, with a few of his nearest friends present, he was laid away to his final rest, within about 100 feet of the railroad track.

Gen. McClernand, commander of the 13th Army Corps, said in his re-

port of the battle: "Among the killed is Col. Kinsman, 23d Iowa, who fell mortally wounded while leading his regiment upon the enemy's works." Gen. Carr, commanding the 4th division of the corps, and an eye-witness, said: "A murderous cross-fire was opened on our men as they moved forward on the run. It was here that the gallant Kinsman of the 23d Iowa lost his life. He received a fatal wound in the abdomen, but still kept on until another through his chest brought him to the ground."

His last words, as I now remember them, were: "Tell the boys I died happy. I fell at the head of my regiment, doing my duty. Bury me here on the field of my last battle."

Kinsman's comrades of the 4th and 23d Iowa, and his friends in Council Bluffs, were very desirous that his remains should be brought back to his home in Iowa, and considerable correspondence occurred. The difficulty seemed to be to find some one who knew and could designate the spot where he was buried. Finally, in the spring of 1884, Lt. N. E. Ride-nour, of the 23d, editor of *The Page County Democrat*, who had taken great personal interest in the matter, and who had appealed to the State legislature in that behalf, but they not acting, he, together with the Rev. A. G. Barton, went to the Black River Bayou battle-ground, east of Vicksburg, with the view of bringing back to Iowa Col. Kinsman's remains; but the changes in the country since the war made it impossible to locate it. They returned greatly disappointed, and their disappointment was shared by all of Kinsman's friends who had looked forward confidently to their bringing his remains with them. Lieut. Straight in his letter to me says he thinks he can find the grave, and during the coming autumn I shall try to have one more effort made to bring his remains to Iowa to be buried at his home with his comrades, where he can be properly honored, and the memory of his deeds perpetuated.

NOTE.—We copy Gen. Dodge's statement of the finding of Col. Kinsman's remains, with his announcement of the reburial, to take place May 17, 1902, and his appeal to old comrades-in-arms for funds with which to erect a monument, on a subsequent page.—EDITOR OF THE ANNALS.

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