

Comment by the Editor

A MOSAIC

History is made up of mosaics with many pieces gone. For some days we have been trying to put together the fragments of a biographical mosaic, but there are still more vacant places than there are colored stones. Probably some of the readers of *THE PALIMPSEST* can supply the missing pieces. Back in the thirties, when the name of Antoine Le Claire was one to conjure with, the town of Le Claire was laid out on the bank of the Mississippi above Davenport. And alongside of it, about the same time, Eleazer Parkhurst and T. C. Eads began another village. It was named Parkhurst after Eleazer who was its first settler, its first postmaster, and its leading citizen. After him came Lemuel Parkhurst and Waldo Parkhurst and others of the clan who built houses and opened stores and helped keep up the rivalry with the adjacent village of Le Claire.

After various fortunes and misfortunes, including the change of the name of their town to Berlin, the followers of Eleazer agreed to join the rivals across the way, and in 1855 a new town of Le Claire was incorporated which included the original Parkhurst.

From the town of Le Claire on February 12, 1862, an eighteen year old boy, Clinton Parkhurst, en-

listed in the Sixteenth Iowa Infantry. It was a new regiment and did not receive ammunition until the morning of April 6, when it entered the Battle of Shiloh. Clinton Parkhurst's impressions of this conflict are told in *A Few Martial Memories* in this number.

Other battles followed, and between the times of desperate fighting there was foraging and skirmishing, long days in camp and on the march, and weary night watches. A year passed — two years — then, one summer day in 1864 in the Atlanta campaign, the gallant Sixteenth Iowa, fighting to the last, was surrounded and practically the entire regiment was forced to surrender. So Clinton Parkhurst, after swinging his rifle against a tree to put it out of commission, ceased fighting for a time and became an inmate of Andersonville Prison. But after a few months the men of the Sixteenth were exchanged and returned to combat service.

In the summer of 1865, Parkhurst was mustered out at Clinton, Iowa. He was still hardly more than a boy, but the years in camp and battle line and prison had deepened his life and given him a heritage of experiences which he never lost.

More than fifty years had gone by since the Battle of Shiloh. The lusty young soldiers who had gathered at reunions after the war and sung "We're Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground"—just as the boys of the American Legion today sing

“Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag”—were fewer in number and their voices were beginning to quaver as they sang. Their blue uniforms which had been the emblem of youth were now the garments of age. In June, 1913, there came to the State Historical Society an envelope containing the manuscript of *A Few Martial Memories* written out painstakingly in longhand and signed by “Clint Parkhurst, 16th Iowa Infantry”. There was something almost startling in the fresh vividness of the account coming to light a half century after the event. No letter accompanied the manuscript. The only clue to an address was the postmark on the envelope: “Marshalltown, Iowa”. A letter addressed to Mr. Clint Parkhurst at that place brought no reply. A friend living in Marshalltown reported no trace of such a person. Sometime afterward a letter written to the Commandant of the Iowa Soldiers’ Home at Marshalltown was answered as follows:

“Clinton Parkhurst was admitted to this Home November 15, 1895 and he deserted this Home on August 22, 1913, and we have heard nothing of him since.”

The rest of the mosaic is missing. What did he do in those thirty years between his mustering out in 1865 and his entering the Soldiers’ Home in 1895? They were the prime of his life — from his twenty-first to his fifty-first years. The *List of Ex-Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Living in Iowa*, published in

1886 by the Adjutant General of the State, does not contain his name. Probably he had moved out of the State. He served throughout the war as a private and perhaps took similar rank in civil life. The chances are that his comings and goings were little noted. Yet we have not had from the pen of any officer on either side any more vivid glimpses of Shiloh than these *Few Martial Memories* by Clinton Parkhurst.

And then, after eighteen years in the Iowa Soldiers' Home, he "deserted". Somewhere, still, he may be alive, dreaming oftentimes perhaps of the beauty of the Sabbath morning when the long roll stirred the air at Pittsburg Landing, of the calmness of the Tennessee River lying "like a sheet of glass" between the highlands where the battle was raging, and the opposite shore where "the lowlands were basking in the sunshine that streamed through the fresh foliage of the trees, and blossoms and flowers were plainly discernible." The boy who listened that day to the increasing roar of the conflict and thought of the ringing of the Sabbath morning church bells in his native State would now be seventy-six years old. We hope he is still living and we take this means of thanking him for the opportunity to preserve his impressions of Shiloh.

J. C. P.