

Iowa Anecdote

CROCKER FOR GOVERNOR

Like many loyal citizens who subscribed to the principles of the Democratic party, Marcellus M. Crocker had hoped that the political dispute between the North and the South might be settled peaceably. But when the news of the capture of Fort Sumter reached Des Moines, he immediately closed his law books and raised a company of volunteers to defend the Union. The military tactics and discipline he had learned at West Point were to be tested on the battlefield.

Crocker's company was mustered into Federal service with the Second Regiment of Iowa Infantry and he was elected Major. In September, 1861, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. A month later he was commissioned Colonel and placed in command of the Thirteenth Iowa Infantry. For gallant conduct at Shiloh and Corinth in the summer of 1862, Colonel Crocker was made a Brigadier General, commanding the Eleventh, Thirteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Iowa regiments. During the long, bloody campaign in Mississippi, Crocker's Iowa Brigade fought valiantly. But the constant strain and ex-

posure sapped the strength of the General. He began to cough. At night he could not rest. Finally, a month before the fall of Vicksburg, he was sent home on a furlough.

No one supported the administration of Governor Kirkwood more loyally than Marcellus M. Crocker. When he heard in March, 1863, that the Governor had been appointed United States Minister to Denmark, he suspected it was a trick of politicians to get rid of the man upon whose honesty and patriotism the soldiers depended. "This certainly would be a bad time for you to give over the affairs of the State to any successor", wrote Crocker from camp. Governor Kirkwood, however, was not a candidate for a third term. "I cannot agree to run again for Governor", he wrote to Crocker.

As the time for nominations drew near, both political parties sought strong candidates. Soldiers were the most popular. Indeed, a man without an honorable military record could not hope to win the election of 1863. But when Republicans asked Crocker to accept their nomination for Governor he declined.

"If a soldier is worth anything, he cannot be spared from the field; if he is worthless, he will not make a good Governor", declared the General. He returned to his troops in July.

JOHN ELY BRIGGS