

CHAPTER I.

Preliminaries-----Esprit De Corps of the Regiment.....Re-
cruiting-----Military Committees-----Patriotism of the
People of the District-----Remembrance of the Dead-----
John Frame and Elmer Armstrong; Hon. James R.
Morris and Others-----Woman's Work for the Soldiers

The One Hundred and Sixteenth Ohio Regiment made a history during the war of the rebellion worthy of preservation, and I have long felt that some one ought to undertake the task of writing it out for publication. I appreciate that the history of the regiment ought to be fair and impartial to be of any value to any one, and so start out with the purpose to make it as nearly so as possible. If ever such a history is to be written, it ought to be possible to write it now...eighteen years after its return from the war.

From the outset of its services, the 116th had faith in itself. Its officers and men had faith in each other, and the people of the group of counties from which it was recruited had faith in it, and have always felt a pride in its career. But unless the permanency of history be soon given to its services, there will be little left beside tradition, camp stories, and the fireside recollections of its few survivors. At first it would seem an easy task to write its history, but when it is considered that a regiment in active service forms an integral part of an army, and perhaps of many armies, and that to give a comprehensive history of a regiment is necessary to give much of the history of the armies with which it served, a different estimate of the task will soon be formed. When the war-worn regiments of the Union Army returned from the field in 1865, there was a feeling among the soldiers and their friends that it would be a pleasing luxury to forget the long story of their perils and sufferings. The blessed benediction of peace shut out forever the anxieties of war, and in a contest in which whole armies had done so nobly, the achievement of particular regiments did not seem, either to the soldiers or to their friends, to demand special mention or record.

But as the years went by, the vast importance of the results attained by the war began to grow more and more apparent. Then there arose a new interest in the minor actors in the struggle. Time had healed the wounds which the close of hostilities had left bleeding, and the lengthening vista of years had exalted the sufferings of the people and their army to the dignity of a hold sacrifice. Each recurring May had seen the church yards and cemeteries of the whole country visited by the people, who with reverence and regard, scattered the sweet flowers of spring upon the graves of their soldiers, and consecrated their graves anew with prayer, eulogy, and sacred and patriotic song. Everywhere the people sang-----

*“From the lily of love that uncloses
In the glow of a festival?? kiss,
On the wind that is heavy with roses
And shrill with the bugles of bliss,
Let it float o’er the mystical ocean
That breaks on the kingdom of night-----
Our oath of eternal devotion
To the heroes who died for the right !”*

*“Ah, grander in doom-stricken glory
Than the greatest that linger behind,
They shall live in perpetual story,
Who saved the last hope of mankind !
For their cause was the cause of the races
That languished in slavery’s night;
And the death that was pale on their faces
Has filled the whole world with its light !”*

*“To the clouds and the mountains we breathe it,
To the freedom of planet and star;
Let the tempests of ocean enwreath it,
Let the winds of the night bear it far-----*

*Our oath, that, till manhood shall perish,
And honor and virtue are sped,
We are true to the cause that they cherish,
And eternally true to the dead !”*

ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTEENTH O. V. I.

So during these years, there has arisen a new interest in the more minute details of the great conflict. The history of the great leaders is familiar to us all, but only in the details of a regimental history can we see and learn the record of the *private soldier*, to whom, after all, is due the glory of the victory.

It is true that the history of the regiment in the concrete belongs to the State and the Nation, and nothing that can now be said or done can add to, or take from, the record it has made. But while this is true, the *individual* history of its officers and men is the *home* history of each fireside that contributed to its ranks; and it is due to the memory of its noble dead, to the mothers, fathers, wives and friends of both living and dead, that, while opportunity lasts, the story of the regiment be written and its lessons of heroism, patriotism and devotion to country be preserved.

It shall not be claimed for the 116th that either its officers or its enlisted men possessed greater courage or patriotism than inspired other regiments of Ohio soldiers. All we shall claim is that it marched and fought when and where duty called; that from Moorefield, where it first met the enemy in battle, to Appomattox, where the white flags of the rebellion were thrown to the breeze before its skirmishers, it never wavered or faltered in its duty or failed to perform the part assigned it in the work of destroying treason to the flag, and planting the imperiled nation anew upon the firm rock of peace.

The sacrifices made, the sufferings endured, the weary marches, the lonely night vigils, the days and nights of hunger and fatigue, wounds, sickness, death in battle and in hospital, and that worse than death...long lingering in Southern prison pens...the thrill of the bayonet charge, the steady tread of brave men advancing to the battle shock, the gloom of disaster and defeat and the loud paeans of victory, these constitute the material out of which the history of a regiment is made. To portray these properly we must follow the trail of the men in the ranks. Some of this we approach with pleasure and pride, much of it with hesitation and pain. To how many is “the 116th” the synonym of woe. How many hearts are made to bleed at the sad recollections its mention revives? And yet to these bleeding hearts may it not be a solace and a balm to feel and know that their heroic dead are not forgotten by their surviving comrades; that it is in their honor we write; that had we no dead there would be no honor, no glory, no fame, no history worth recording, and that with us, as with them, reverence for our dead.

*“Is never old and never new,
Because it is eternal.”*

The history of the 116th would not be properly begun without referring to the noble men who exerted themselves in recruiting it, who gave their time, their money, their voices and their influence to filling its ranks. To the military committees of the different counties very great credit is due, and that they may be known to all the friends of the regiment they are given below:

ATHENS COUNTY—M. M. Greene, Hon. J. W. Bayard, H. T. Brown, S.W. Pickering,
Hon. L. L. Smith, Capt. J. M. Dana, E. H. Moore, W. R. Golden, T. F. Wildes.

MONROE COUNTY—Hon. Wm. F. Hunter, Hon. J. A. Davenport, John Kerr, Stephen
S. Ford, J. M. Kirkbridge, Nathan Hollister.

NOBLE COUNTY—J. Belford, E. G. Dudley, John M. Rounds, B. F. Spriggs, Wm.
H. Frazer, John W. Tipton, Dr. M. Martin.

MEIGS COUNTY—Hiram G. Daniels, David R. Jacobs, J. V. Smith, Ed. Tiffany,
N. Stanberry, Geo. Eiselstein, G. W. Cooper

WASHINGTON COUNTY—Col. W. R. Putnam, Geo. W. Barker, S. F. Cooke,
Mark Greene, John Newton.

All of these men took a very active part in raising the regiment, but many others helped. In Athens County Elmer Armstrong, Joseph Herrold, Elza Armstrong, N. O. Warren, John Frame, W. F. Pilcher, A. D. Jaynes, the Glaziers, the Postons, William Golden. Hon. W. Reed, Golden and many others, took an active part. Conspicuous in the work was Elmer Armstrong. He organized the “amen corner” at the meetings, to which he especially invited all the “Bible Democracy.”

The 92d was full on August 15th. The call of the Governor for two full regiments from the district was issued July 9th. The 92d was raised in two weeks after the work of recruiting was begun. As soon as the 92d was full, every one kept at work to raise the 116th. In Monroe County, prominent in the work of recruiting was Hon. James R. Morris, Democratic member of Congress. There never was in Ohio such a deep-seated, universal feeling of patriotism, as was witnessed during the months of July and August, 1862. The women took as deep interest in the work of recruiting the 92d and 116th as did the men. They attended the meetings. Many “basket” meetings were held at which the women furnished excellent meals, and no troops passed on the railroads without being well fed. The enthusiasm was unbounded everywhere all over the district. But great as was the enthusiasm in the other parts of the district, it was excelled in Monroe. That county had seven companies to raise under the quota. Such men as Hon. James R. Morris, Hon. Wm. Okey, Jacob Mitchell, L. L. Mooney, J. B. Noll, and William Read, in connection with the military committee which we have named, took the work in hand. After all arrangements were perfected for the work of recruiting, these gentlemen, with many others, took the county by storm, and in less than three weeks the quota of Monroe County was full, two companies going into the 92d and five into the 116th; and the people of Monroe County have ever since availed themselves of every opportunity to do honor to the 116th regiment.

Very few regiments from Ohio exceeded the 116th in personnel. It was composed of the very best men of the counties from which it was recruited. They had not gone out in the first hot flush excited by the firing on of Fort Sumter and the opening of hostilities, but the necessities of the Government, now so pressing and so apparent, appealed to their judgement as well as to their patriotism, and with equal alacrity and determination with those who had gone before, they stepped into the ranks and went forth to fight the battles of their country against the gigantic conspiracy which threatened its existence. There was now real danger, which was not clear until now, of the dissolution of the union between the States, of the arresting of the progress, the paralyzing of the energies of the whole country, and the destruction of the peace of the Nation forever. The who people felt the imminence of the danger which now threatened their liberties in the destruction of not only the form, but the very framework, of their republican institutions. The conspirators had been in deadly earnest from the outset, while we had not been more than half in earnest. Till now Nation and people had been half tampering, half pleading with treason, but now both had determined henceforth to battle against it in earnest,

*“And taking counsel but of common sense,
To strike at cause as well as consequence.”*

The stake in the contest was now seen to be human rights and civil liberty. No man who loved his country, on whose soil and under whose flag ad grown the perfect embodiment of liberty, could turn a deaf ear to the appeal. Beneath the beneficent influences of the government established under our constitution, humanity had asserted its dignity and its truth; intelligence had become the birthright of all; peace had reigned supreme; and over boundless states, territories, hills, valleys, plains, rivers and lakes, the jubilant bells of a happy people rang out their never ending praises of the perfect freedom they enjoyed. All this was put in jeopardy by a ruthless and treasonable faction now advanced so far in its purpose that naught but its utter annihilation would save the country. The alternative thus presented to the people was soon chosen. To hesitate now was to perish. The American pro-slavery rebellion never had any foundation in truth, no defense in law, no justification in equity or good conscience. Even had the ends proposed and promised been attained it could not justify itself before a single nation in Christendom. With “slavery as the cornerstone” it would have been a blotch upon the face of the earth and a disgrace to the nineteenth century. But the war into which this causeless rebellion plunged the country could not end in its success

without resulting in the downfall of the civil liberties of the people of the whole country. In its triumph slavery, with all its attendant curses, would have been the rule and freedom the exception all over the country, and the proud name of *American*, so far from being an honor above title of nobility or stars of an emperor's decoration, would be the object of the scorn and derision of the civilized world. It was to this peril the country was approaching when the President called for twice 300,000 men in the summer of 1862, and it was to thwart this that a half million of our people were inspired to step into the ranks of the Union Army. War had no charms or allurements for them, else they had seized the sword at the first alarm of war. They were rather of those who suffer much before resenting insult, but who, when aroused, are the more formidable antagonists.

The war had now assumed the character of a revolt of the union-loving, freedom-loving people of the republic against the insolence of treason and slavery. This now was not only felt, but it was seen. It was either an inglorious peace and disgraceful submission, or a complete crushing out of the military power of the rebellion. The whole people, with very rare ignoble exceptions, had determined upon the latter conclusion of the contest. And so, without thought or respect of party, in every county of our military district, as well as all over the State, there was a unanimity in the work of recruiting for the new regiments never before seen.

Two men in Athens County, both Democrats in politics, were so conspicuous in the work that we feel it due to them to make special mention of their services. We refer to John Frame, of Coolville, and Elmer Armstrong, of Hibbardsville. They were men of considerable wealth and prominence, and peculiarly enthusiastic in their method of doing everything they took hold of. Throwing their whole strength and power into the canvass for recruits, there was soon aroused all over Athens County the highest state of excitement and enthusiasm. They traveled, talked and worked day and night, until their county's quota was full; and when our regiment was organized they were both strenuously urged to take charge of the sutler's department, where we knew they would be of great service to the men. Mr. Frame felt himself too old and infirm to attempt it, but Mr. Armstrong accepted the appointment, which he soon shared with A. J. Frame, a son of John Frame. Another son, A. B. Frame, was a lieutenant in company "I." Of the military committees we have named, it would be invidious to speak of one in more flattering terms than of another. They each and all did all that men could do, not only before, but after the regiment went to the field, continuing their kind offices and interest in its welfare until the expiration of its term of service.

It will not, I hope, be considered foreign to the purpose of this volume to mention that great popular work which made care for the soldiers and their families the business of life for our tenderest and best at home while the war lasted. Of much of it no man may speak. Like charity it recoils from publicity. It would be intruding to attempt to measure the love of the mothers, sisters and wives at home for the soldiers in the field. But who could attempt it? Who can chronicle the prayers and the labors to shield them from death and disaster? Who can find words to describe the womanly fervor which counted loss, suffering, self-denial and even life as nothing so that God might give victory to the Union arms in the battle for liberty and the right? But to the soldiers in the field the tangible results of the great work for their relief carried on by the women at home were so many, so varied, so valuable, so life-saving, that no regimental history would be complete without their mention and grateful acknowledgment. In fact, it would be cruel thoughtlessness and deep ingratitude for any regiment to overlook woman's work during the war. No soldier could turn in any direction without meeting with something that bespoke her thought, her care, her love and her constant effort to lighten the burden, and soften the hardships of his lot.

Immediately after the organization of the "Cincinnati Branch of the Sanitary Commission" in November, 1861, branch "Soldiers' Aid Societies" were organized in all the counties. Early in May a "Soldiers' Aid Society" had been organized in Athens with Mrs. E. M. Wildes as president. About the same time similar societies were organized in Pomeroy, Marietta, Coolville and surrounding towns. These societies connected themselves with the Sanitary Commission at Cincinnati as soon as it was established, thus gathering into one receptacle the fruits of all their joint labors. "Camp Jewett" being established at Athens early in 1861 brought to the very doors of the kind hearted women of Athens the care of many sick soldiers. The entire county was soon after organized for relief work through the efforts of the society at Athens, and it so remained through the war. It would be impossible to recount the work done there, much less throughout the other counties of the military district. Hundreds of sick, and hungry, and wounded soldiers

were cared for through the instrumentality of these aid societies. Every battle was the signal for sending forward large stores for the relief of the wounded. After very many of the more serious engagements, urgent calls for relief came from the battle fields and these were responded to with the greatest promptness and generosity. After the battle of Shiloh, a strong appeal for help came. Several large boxes of hospital and camp supplies were sent off on the 7th of April, the last day of the battle, in charge of a committee, Messrs. Twombly, F. L. Ballard and the writer. Day and night the women of all the societies in the county worked, and on the 9th, the 10th and the 11th, other supplies were sent to the Sanitary Commission at Cincinnati. Among the old files of the "Athens Messenger" we find, among many others, the following letter of acknowledgment:

Cincinnati, April, 14th, 1862

Mrs. E. M. Wildes, Pres. Soldier's Aid Society, Athens, Ohio:

Dear Madam:--On behalf of our Commission, I acknowledge the receipt of your present, as well as of former contributions. Please accept our thanks for the same, The demands now made upon us are very great and pressing, and we welcome aid from every quarter.

Very Respectfully,

Chas. E. Cist, Cor. Sec'y pro tem.

Not a person connected with all these aid societies received a farthing for her untiring, constant work. Every dollar and ever dollar's worth went to the soldiers in some needed form. In short, it was Christian integrity and scrupulous fidelity in charge of the people's contributions for their men in the ranks. The good thus done can never be written, and perhaps never ought to be written, for it was the work of the heart. In every hospital, in every camp, on every march, on every battle field, the soldier was met by the agents of the Sanitary Commission with the fruits of these hard worked women's toil and care. How much suffering was alleviated, how much prevented, how much comfort afforded, how many sick beds made easy, how many wounds healed, how many precious lives saved through the instrumentality of woman's work in these societies, can never be told on earth. Like the gentle dew their kind charity fell and like it disappeared, leaving memory only that shall blossom into blessings in the immortality of their beneficent results.

But this was not all of woman's good works to the soldiers in the field. Our regiment was a great portion of its time engaged in active campaigning. After we were free from our "base of supplies" and often, too, our "communications were cut off," no one who has not seen it can imagine the joy of "meeting a mail" and reading a "letter from home" from a mother, a father, a wife, a sister, or a sweetheart after such a time, and no one would, if he could, describe the sore disappointment of some boy when he found after waiting expectantly until the last letter was handed out by the chaplain that there was none for him.

The women...old, middle-aged and young...earned many a "God Bless you" for the encouraging letters they wrote to the soldiers. Many a letter from a mother, wife and sister, written to cheer and comfort a son, husband or brother, bore the marks of scalding tears, and required a braver heart to write than it did to face the storm of battle. The agonizing sufferings in the homes out of which the light had gone, and the long, dark days and nights of waiting and watching for its return, could only be endured by the patient heart and strong hope of woman. It would have killed more men than it did women. The aid societies and every act done and word written by the women were a power of good for loyalty. While the union sentiment of a town was sure to crystallize around its "Aid Society," the hearts of the soldiers in the field were cheered and strengthened by the knowledge of the agencies employed at home for their comfort.

When the future historian writes the true history of the War of the Rebellion, woman will be given a first place in the great work of crushing treason and restoring peace and union. No better expression has ever been given to the noble work, the silent pain and courageous suffering of woman, in that great struggle for civil liberty, than that found in the following beautiful poem by T. Buchanan Read, entitled—

“THE BRAVE AT HOME.”

*“The maid who binds her warrior’s sash
With smile that well her pain dissembles,
The while, beneath her drooping lash,
One starry tear-drop hangs and trembles.
Though Heaven alone regards the tear,
And fame shall never know her story,
Her heart has shed a drop as dear
As ever dewed the field of glory.”*

*“The wife who girds her husband’s sword,
‘Mid little ones who weep and wonder,
And bravely speaks the cheering word—
What though her heart be rent asunder?
Doomed, nightly in her dreams, to hear
The bolts of war around him rattle,
Hath shed as sacred blood as e’er
Was poured upon the plain or battle.”*

*“The mother who conceals her grief,
While to her breast her son she presses,
Then breathes a few brave words and brief,
Kissing the patriot brow she blesses;
With no one but her secret God
To know the pain that weighs upon her,
Sheds holy blood as e’er the sod
Received on Freedom’s field of honor.”*

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