

ON TO WASHINGTON

N^o 2 Fifty Years Ago

My last article left us on the Battery, a wide open space on the extreme southern point of Manhattan Island. Here we struggled with squad drill and the Irish and waited impatiently for uniforms, arms and equipments and fretted about conditions we could not control, and here began a feud between Co.s H and E which was the source of many a sore head.

Our rations were a source of serious complaint among the Cattaraugus boys, but with the New York fellows who were more used to soup-house fare there was not so much objection. One day the soup was unusually bad, one of Co. H's men declared there were bugs swimming around in his, and jumping on the table scattered his soup over the crowd and started down the line kicking tinware and soup right and left until he ran into Co. E, then there was a fight and it was never settled to Co. E's satisfaction which was the best company to the day we were mustered out, and it was tried over and over again.

Probably I ought not to overlook an incident that occurred at the muster in of the regiment as it has been differently and erroneously related by some. When the regiment was drawn up in line to take the constitutional oath, the mustering officer requested any who did not wish to take the oath to step three paces to the front, give his name and be excused; four men of Co. H availed themselves of the opportunity; one was coming down with measles, one had been promised a job he failed to land and was tired of Tammany politics; one was nursing a sore head as a result of that fight with Co. E and so did not like the Irish and the fourth was disappointed because he did not get something to eat better than he had at home for common, hence, came to the sage conclusion that "there was no place like home." Three of these men served with honorable distinction in other organizations. No one was "drummed out of the regiment," until after the battle of Fredericksburg, two men were dishonorably discharged, branded on their left hips with the letter "C" and drummed out for "leaving the ranks in the face of the enemy" one had been enlisted from Allegany and the other from Ellicottville.

At length our outfit arrived; the uniforms were well adapted to resist the rigors of a northern winter but for service under a burning southern sun—well, Uncle Sam has learned better. Our equipments were as modern as anything fifty years ago. As for our arms, we had expected rifles to go with the name Col. McCunn had given his regiment; instead we received a very ancient pattern of Harper's Ferry musket; it did not have a two-inch bore as some wrote home at the time, but it did carry a two-ounce cartridge. Forty rounds of cartridges and a twenty-two pound gun with all the traps a greenhorn thought necessary to stuff in and strap on his knapsack soon convinced the hardiest that economy in luggage was a "military necessity."

Our Cattaraugus boys took the guns as a joke and much to the disgust of the Irish lads called them "Irish rifles."

The day finally came, June 23, 1861, fifty years ago tomorrow, when we should leave for Washington. The ladies of New York presented us with an elegant stand of colors, consisting of two silk flags, one was the National flag and the other was the Irish flag on which had been embroidered in gold the harp and the shamrock. We cheered ourselves hoarse for the ladies, marched aboard a boat for Amboy where we took the cars and were off to the war. In the early evening we changed cars at Philadelphia and experienced our first taste of the more than generous hospitality of the ladies of that city who had thus early organized for the war. They greeted us with smiles, kind and encouraging words, sandwiches and coffee and sent us on our way with a God speed I have never forgotten.

In the early morning of June 24, we left the cars on the outskirts of Baltimore and marched through the city with loaded guns and fixed bayonets prepared to avenge the blood of the sixth Massachusetts if any signs of active disloyalty should become manifest. The streets were deserted, business places closed curtains down and everything betokened an enemy's country. Arriving at Washington near noon, June 24, we marched to East Capitol Hill and set up camp and named it Camp Mary in honor of Mrs. Lincoln who honored us with her presence in company with her illustrious husband, the President, one evening a few days after our arrival.

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