

The Militia Muster, or Battalion Day.

Sixty or seventy-five years ago neither legal nor other holidays were as common in Lancaster county as they are to-day. It is true that New Year's Day received some attention at the hands of those who owned firearms; Good Friday was observed by a majority of the steady church goers, while the Fourth of July was also remembered in a perfunctory sort of a way by a few over-charged patriots. Christmas Day met with a more general observance than any of the rest, gift and merry makings and visitations being the principal demonstrations. There were also annual fairs and races which attracted a good deal of attention, but these were mostly local in their character and gradually dropped out of sight and almost out of memory, as the years rolled on. Lincoln's Birthday, the Spring Election, Decoration Day, Labor Day, Fall Election and Thanksgiving were of course all unknown and unthought of.

But there was one other day, which, although never made a legal holiday and never observed as such, was more generally observed as a holiday and called out more people than any other day in the entire calendar and which was more looked forward to than perhaps any of the present legal holidays, Christmas alone excepted. I allude, of course, to the well-known and time-honored day in our old time Pennsylvania calendar, "Militia Muster" or "Battalion Day." The present generation deserves to be pitied because it has no personal knowledge of this ever-to-be remembered festival. Who that has been there and seen it and taken

part in it can ever forget? Especially, what boy!

Providing a Fund.

The pleasures of anticipation came first, ever so many weeks ahead of the great day itself. There was the hustle for spending money. Tips in those days were unknown. Running errands and doing minor jobs were not very well rewarded. There were no nickels, but there were big copper cents and "fips" and "levies." Battalion Day brought temptations and opportunities for spending such as the rest of the year could not show, and it was every young boy's ambition to have a little hoard of ready cash by the time the big day arrived. By the time the sum had grown to a levy, or twelve and a-half cents, the country boy began to feel he was master of the situation. That meant at least one shrivelled orange, ninety days out from some Mediterranean port; it meant, in addition, at least three sections of ginger cake, each two inches thick, and broken from a still larger checker-board section nearly a yard square. There were huckster women in those days who had attained eminence in this line of business, and the three cart-wheel coppers were fore-ordained long in advance to find a temporary resting place in the pocket of some favorite baker. Then there was the bowl of oyster soup that was over the charcoal stove all day long, and, perhaps, for days previously, so that the half-dozen morsels represented as oysters might, with much propriety, have been called anything else. Oyster soup was a luxury which could only be indulged in when the financial resources reached as much as a quarter; less than that forbade such extravagance. Then there were miscellaneous inducements very hard to resist. Meade and small beer and lemonade. The making of these drinks appears to me to be a lost art. We shall never drink them again as they

were made sixty years ago. Add to the foregoing a further small sum for candies, and the boy's exchequer was exhausted, and, tired and weary, he betook himself to his bed, to dream of a fairyland where every day was a Battalion Day.

Gathering of the Clans.

But there were other things worth seeing and doing on this great day. How can its glories be told with less than the pen of inspiration! My own recollections of it began early in the morning. I lived in the house where an aged Revolutionary soldier resided. Colonel B—, who lived nearby, always brought the drummers and fifers to this house, and for half an hour they discoursed martial music in honor of the veteran. The aged hero dearly prized this attention, and I am sure I took it all in.

Later in the day came the mustering of the clans. It was an unforgettable sight, and all language must fail to do it justice. Of course, the chief attraction was the gorgeously apparelled officers. There was a prescribed uniform for the officers, but no attention was paid to it by most of them. Every one was allowed to follow his own sweet fancies, and the result can only be described by Dominie Sampson's favorite expression, "prodigious." The only limit to the officer's uniform was the depth of his purse and his own bad taste. I think I have seen Sergeants and Corporals more splendidly caparisoned than Admiral Dewey or General Miles ever were. But there were other uniforms, more venerable, less splendid, but quite as striking; uniforms that had seen service in the war of 1812; coats that bore unmistakable traces of the fashions of a much earlier day. They were rendered still more striking from having descended from diminutive sires to sons who deserved a place in the German Emperor's regi-

ment of giants. The effect was at once striking and picturesque. Even the young boy's esthetic sense could not withstand this violation of the proprieties, and, after a lapse of more than fifty years, I can still, in my mind's eye, see the unique picture, and cannot forbear laughing as often as I recall it. Some great artist of the time should have handed down, on canvas, this most memorable sight of the century. Word pictures are tame and meaningless compared with the actual verities of the occasion. Some further glimpses, true to nature in every respect, will be caught from the verses that are to follow.

The Militia Law.

But, before going further, it may be well to give some insight into the institution of Battalion Day. By an act of the Legislature, passed on April 2, 1822, provision was made for the regulation of the militia force of the Commonwealth. The Constitution of the State provided that "The freemen of this Commonwealth shall be armed and disciplined for its defense. Those who have conscientious scruples to bearing arms shall not be compelled to do so, but shall pay an equivalent for personal service." The act of the Legislature just referred to divided the State into sixteen military districts. Lancaster county comprised a district by itself, the Fourth. Each division consisted of two brigades; the latter consisted of not less than three regiments and of not more than five. Every regiment was divided into two battalions. The number of companies in each regiment could not be less than eight nor more than twelve, and the number of non-commissioned officers and privates in each company was not to be less than seventy nor more than one hundred and fifty. Every able-bodied man who resided in the Commonwealth one month, and was be-

tween the ages of eighteen and forty-five years, was to be enrolled, only those with religious scruples being excepted.

Every division was entitled to one Major General and two Aides-de-camp, with the rank of Major. Each brigade had a Brigadier General and minor officers; every regiment a Colonel, a Lieutenant Colonel, two Majors, one Surgeon and minor officers; each company a Captain, two Lieutenants, five Sergeants, six Corporals and two musicians and the regulation number of privates. Elections were held in June, every seven years, for the selection of Brigadier Generals, Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels and Majors for each brigade and regiment. Elections for company officers were held every seventh year. The militia were to be trained in companies and battalions on the first Monday in May, in every year. Fines were imposed on officers and privates who refused or neglected to do the duties assigned to them. There were nearly one hundred sections to this militia law, covering a multitude of details, but I have given enough to show the nature of the militia establishment of the State.

Author of the Verses.

After this somewhat lengthy introduction the following descriptive verses are submitted. They are the property of Mr. Henry G. Book, of this city, who found them among some old papers that fell into his hands, and who has kindly permitted this use of them. The time at which they were written was about 1833, so far as can be ascertained. For a long time the author was unknown, but the evidence pointed to the late Patrick Donnelly, Esq., who was a prose writer of vigor and a well-known versifier in his youth. The manuscript was submitted to his son, Mr. Clarence A. Donnelly, who at once and without hesitation pronounced the writing to be that of his

father, which, of course, settles the question. It is not pretended that this screed merits much consideration judged as a mere piece of versification. It violates poetic rules in almost every stanza, but that does not detract from its value as an accurate and truthful account, barring some allowable exaggerations, of what the Battalion Day was two generations ago:

THE MILITIA MUSTER AT LAN-
CASTER, PA.

Oh, it was worth ten years of peaceful
life.

One glance of their array!

—Scott.

One morning, in the month of May,
When nature all looks fair,
It being the annual Muster Day,
To it I did repair,
With a stick upon my shoulder,
Being the handle of a Broom,
In hopes when I'd grow Older
I might wear Sword and Plume.

At Lancaster, in Prince street square,
The Trainbands did Parade;
The Nation's pride assembled there.
To form a grand brigade.
There Captain D—, and Captain C—,
And many Captains more;
While the Drums beat up the revellee,
Each led his Valliant Corps.

There stood Tow Hill, in all its might,
And Bethelstown, likewise.
Some veterans that had been in fight
Were wounded 'round their Eves.
There Adamstown was all arrayed,
As heroes late from war,
While they their front and rear display'd
With many a seamy scar.

There the bold Manheim rangers,
Of full-breasted Yeomanry,
That had braved many dangers
In the wars of Germany.
When North and South and East and
West
Had huddled all together,
It made the blood warm in my breast,
How they saluted Each other.

When they, as brother soldiers met
The Bulwark of the nation,
And that no star might ever set
In our bright constellation.
And to promote the public weal
Was every one's desire;
The Captains with their blades of steel,
Their men with hearts of fire.

Then Captain D— addressed his men
“Now, boys, stand straight and dress!
Look at C's company and then
You'll soon learn how, I guess.
Now, boys, obey commands;
Count by the sections three.
Ease off, that next the Court House
stands;
Look up this way, towards me.”

And there appeared bold Colonel Reah,
As second in command;
As if he was bold Marshal Ney,
To head that valliant band.
His plume, it wavered in the gale,
Being of a glossy red;
And, bushy as a fox's tail,
Hung over his knowing head.

His sash, that knotted 'round his waist,
Was of deep scarlet Dye.
His shoulders square, two epaulets graced,
That spangled in the sky.
He stately strode a long-tailed gray,
And passed the sentry 'round;
He glanced upon his shadow gay,
That wavered on the ground.

And then, upon the windows bright
A knowing look cast he;
If any fair could see the knight
Of far-famed chivalry.
He rode with an exulting air,
As he flew swiftly by;
For he knew the brave deserved the fair,
Which none will e'er deny.

Indeed, his regimentals all
Showed him a warrior true;
And lust'ly he began to bawl,
To show what he could do.
“Attention, Battalions!” was the word
Of this bold Marshal Ney;
And then he brandished his broad sword,
To make them all obey.

Beneath the floating stars and stripes,
They slowly formed a line;

And then the fashion, wide and tight,
Did all look wondrous fine.
Some many colors did compose,
In patchwork side by side;
For variety, the world all knows,
Is Pennsylvania's Pride.

There were Roundabouts, and short coats,
too,

And swallow-tails also,
Of every shade from red to blue,
All ranged in a row.
Some wore straw hats and some fur
caps;
Some beavers, with low crowns;
And there, without distinction, stepped
The dandies and the clowns.

The five feet fours and six feet threes,
There side by side they stood,
Like Hickories and Black oak trees
Together in a wood.

And there was Tom and Jerry,
Dawson, Dellet, Hambright, Bell;
And there both Buck and Berry
The crowded ranks did fill.

Some chins were shaven clean and bare,
Just like a new-mown field;
Some wore long beards and bushy hair,
Their long, bare necks to shield.
And then the Marshal loud did call,
"Count off by sections six,
Back to the rear each three steps fall,
And shoulder all your sticks."

And then shillalies, polished fair,
All rose in Majesty,
And changed and glittered in the air—
An awful sight to see.

There stalks of mullen, stalks of corn,
And Broomsticks brandished high;
As if to say, with a proud scorn,
Invading foes must die.

The General Orders, given then,
Was, "Right about your face,"
There was a place for every man,
And each man in his place.

And soon again the next command
Was, all should march in Order,
And then struck up the Martial band,
"We're Marching to the border."

Of wood our armor was composed,
But every heart was steeled,

When we in solid Phalanx closed,
And Marched off to the field.
When Marching up West King street,
Our grand, Imposing files,
Then all the Ladies did us greet,
With showers of nods and smiles.

Our Drummers strove to beat Old Time,
But Old Time beat them handy,
Until they made their sheepskin chime
To "Yankee Doodle Dandy."
And when we came to the broad green
That Heaven had spread before us,
We formed two lines—three steps be-
tween—
With two Flags floating o'er us.

Then the Drummers louder beat,
And the fifers louder blew,
That the commanders all should meet
To hold a grand review.
Soon came the bold Inspector,
With his brave Doctor T—,
Our surgeon and dissector,
If any should wounded be.

And up our lines, quite gracefully,
They rode, with caps in hand;
And did their duty as faithfully
As any in the land.
Then we poured forth a grand salute,
As those brave men did pass;
And, when our ranks were still and mute,
He did us thus address:

"Fellow Soldiers: You all appear
This day to do your duty;
It's a glorious sight to see you here,
Your country's Pride and beauty.
As if you were this day prepared
To revenge your country's wrongs,
For, by the deeds your Fathers dared,
To you revenge belongs.

"If an Invader would but see,
This day, our grand parade,
He would in consternation flee,
And ne'er again invade.
Methinks I hear the clash of arms,
If you'd attack the foe;
Methinks I hear their dread alarms,
And see their legions low.

"And by the Brave, Immortal slain,
That fell at Bunker's Hill,

We will Inviolatè maintain,
Our Union's sovereign will.
For to resist the mad desires
Of Power and Ambition,
And let the haughty Nullifiers
Know our true position.

“For Pennsylvania, ever bright,
That no foul deed does Tarnish;
To Nullifiers sheds her light,
Without the aid of varnish.
And soon her sons would take the field
'Gainst pride and Usurpation,
And make the haughty Traitors yield,
Or Fight to Desperation.”

These words the patriot did express,
With a high, heroic spirit;
With loud huzzas all did confess,
His fame and growing merit.
Then we our arms all did ground,
And hie to festive boards,
Where Beauty and Brandy did abound—
The best the world affords.

Some toasted our brave commander,
The nation's pride and boast;
That would stand like salamander,
And ne'er give up the ghost.
Some damn'd all authors of treason,
While they poised the flowing bowl,
That inspired a feast of reason,
And enlarged a flow of soul.

So, having learned the Exercise
Of that eventful day,
Fearing a defeat, I thought it wise,
From them to march away,
Manheim's merry muse,
One of the full-breasted yeoman.

Persons Referred to Identified.

And now a few words concerning some of the allusions in the verses. The latter were submitted to Dr. J. Augustus Ehler, as one of the few living men in this city whose memories reach back to the period covered by the poem, and who had a personal knowledge of all the persons referred to.

The “Captain D.——— and Captain C.——— alluded to in verse two were James Donnelly, a lively, gay-hearted

Irishman, always full of fun and jollity; and James Cameron, a brother of the late Senator Simon Cameron. He conducted a beer brewery on the site now occupied by the Maennerchor premises.

The Manheim Rangers was a military organization in Manheim township, and to which versifier Donnelly intimates in the concluding lines that he belonged.

The Col. R. so prominently alluded to was the distinguished lawyer, Reah Frazer, whom many of us recollect. He was ardently attached to military affairs, hence the prominence given him. There was also a large amount of political friction between Frazer and Donnelly, as they belonged to different factions of the Democratic party. Donnelly published a series of bitter political articles, assailing Mr. Frazer, which were afterwards published in book form, under the title of "War-horsiana," Colonel Frazer being then and long after known as the "War Horse" of his party.

"Bill" Bush and Joseph Forrest were the drummers of that day; "Nancy" Garber was the bass-drummer and — Erisman the fifer.

While the order of march was formed near the centre of the city, the brigade marched out West King street to the "Commons," in the northwestern part of the city, beyond Charlotte and Chestnut streets.

The Brigade Inspector was General Andrew B. Kauffman, father of Junius B. Kauffman, Esq.

Dr. Thompson was a prominent medical practitioner of that day, who, at that time, lived at No. 156 East King street.

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