

**WAR STORIES FOR
MY
GRANDCHILDREN**

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War stories for my grandchildren by John W. Foster

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JOHN W. FOSTER

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GRANDCHILDREN**



Major John W. Foster



Mary Burke Foster

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By
JOHN W. FOSTER ✓



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PREFACE

As they were growing up, I was frequently importuned by my grandchildren to tell them of my experiences in the Civil War for the Union; and now as the great-grandchildren are coming on, their parents are asking that these experiences be put in some permanent form, as their children may never have the opportunity to hear the narrative from me. I naturally shrink from giving general publicity to my personal experiences, especially as the field has been already so fully covered by comrades in arms; but I have consented to prepare such a narrative on condition that its circulation be confined to the family circles.

In preparing the narrative I have not thought it wise to trust to my memory of events which happened more than half a century ago; and fortunately I have at hand my many letters written to my wife, giving in detail my experiences during my entire service in the army, and while they are in some respects too intimate and confidential for general publicity, they have the merit of freedom from studied preparation and constitute an account of events as they occurred.

In this preparation I have indulged the hope that through it our children of this and coming generations may be inspired by a greater devotion to the American Union, for which their forefathers hazarded their lives and endured the hardships of war.

JOHN W. FOSTER

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WAR STORIES FOR MY GRANDCHILDREN

I

INTRODUCTION

AFTER the inauguration of President Lincoln, March 4, 1861, much discussion followed in Washington and in the North, and plans were proposed respecting peaceable adjustment of the troubles occasioned by the secession of the Southern States from the Union. But the first hostile gun fired at Fort Sumter and the National flag, on April 12, put an end to all peace proposals, and solidified the North in favor of restoring and preserving the Union by force of arms. As one of our statesmen of that day expressed it, yesterday there had been difference of opinion, to-day there was unity.

When two days afterwards the President's call for seventy-five thousand volunteers for three months' service was issued, my first impulse was to respond to that call; but before any movement for enlistments could be made in our locality the quota of Indiana was filled to overflowing. I was content for several reasons to await the progress of events.

I cherished no desire for military glory, and distrusted my special fitness for the life of a soldier. In my college days I had contracted a horror of war and regarded it as the most

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terrible and futile of human follies. Shortly before my graduation I had delivered a public address for my literary society on peace and war, using as its title Charles Sumner's well-known oration — "The True Grandeur of Nations." I regarded myself as a peace man.

I had only recently entered upon the practice of my profession, and was ambitious to make a reputation as a lawyer. But, most serious of all, I had just established a modest home with a young wife and our first-born babe of less than a year old. It would be a terrible strain upon my affections and hopes to break these dearest of all ties for a life in the military service.

I, with the great body of the people of the North, entertained the hope that the seventy-five thousand men, who constituted the army so quickly formed, would prove sufficient for the reëstablishment of the Federal Union. But the battle of Bull Run, July 21, dispelled that delusion, and the President's call for three hundred thousand afterwards increased to five hundred thousand volunteers for three years' service indicated that a long and bloody war was in prospect. I resolved no longer to delay my entrance into that service.

Two days after that battle I wrote my wife as follows: —

"I intended to have written you a long letter last night in reply to your good one received yesterday afternoon, but I had no heart to write. The terrible and disastrous calamity to our army has made me sick. A thousand times rather would I have given my life and left you a widow and my darling child fatherless than that this defeat should have