

**KANSAS
MISCELLANIES**

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Kansas miscellanies by Noble L. Prentis

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KANSAS MISCELLANIES.

BY
NOBLE L. PRENTIS.

"As the gray and melancholy main to the sailor, the desert to the Bedouin, the Alp to the mountaineer, so is Kansas to all her children."—JOHN JAMES INGALLS.

Second Edition.

TOPEKA:
KANSAS PUBLISHING HOUSE,
1889.

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PREFACE.

It is believed that the contents of this little volume will explain its title. They are miscellaneous, and everything between the covers has some reference to or connection with Kansas, and Kansas people.

"Battle Corners" was suggested by a visit to the battle-fields of Prairie Grove, Pea Ridge, and Wilson's Creek. There is no attempt to give a historical account of those battles. A critical narrative of one of those combats would fill a volume like this. There is no attempt to catalogue the brave. What is here are but the reflections of the writer—an effort to describe the localities as they are now, with the hope that others may be led to visit them; and the recollections of three old soldiers, given after the lapse of many years, and without aid to the memory, but, it is believed, given so vividly that others will see with the mind's eye.

"The World a School" has appeared in print in many forms, and was included in the volume known as "A Kan-

san Abroad." It appears here at the suggestion of many friends.

For the rest, it may be said that they consist of sketches which appeared originally in Kansas newspapers, and of addresses delivered to Kansas audiences. These are presented, without regard to lapse of time, in the form in which they received the honor of being copied in Kansas newspapers, and the kindly mention of Kansas people. They are selected from a mass of writings, the labor of nearly twenty years, in which there has scarcely been a day when the writer has not said some word for Kansas, the land of the sunflower and the breeze. To the always-lenient judgment of the Kansas public they are again committed.

TOPEKA, February, 1889.

N. L. P.

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The favor accorded the first edition of this book has induced the publication of a second. This edition contains a number of corrections and changes; some in the interest of conciseness, some in justice to the facts. For the benefit of eyes which fade and fail as we grow old, it is printed in larger type.

TOPEKA, August, 1889.

N. L. P.

KANSAS MISCELLANIES.

BATTLE CORNERS.

[T was in the closing days of the year 1888 that the writer, in company with the Commissioner, visited the country which will be spoken of in these pages as "Battle Corners."

In the school atlases in vogue in the early '50's there were patches of red or yellow covering the southwest corner of the State of Missouri, the northwest quarter of the State of Arkansas, the southeast quarter of what had recently become the Territory of Kansas, and the northeast quarter of what had been reduced to the present Indian Territory. In the Missouri quarter there was one dot—Springfield; in the Kansas corner a star—the Government military post of Fort Scott; in the fraction of Arkansas a dot—it was probably Fayetteville, though it may have been Fort Smith; in the Territory the solitary mark indicating Fort Gibson.

Scattered about in this region the metes and bounds of which have been loosely indicated, were given in ir-

regular lines the geographer's or map-maker's idea of the Ozark mountains; an elevated region rather than a regular chain.

The map-makers left this country thus unmarked and void because man had left it so; and ten years later it is doubtful if there was in the United States at that time a country, nominally under the operations of law and settlement as long as the States of Arkansas and Missouri had been, more solitary than these "corners," more destitute of common roads and bridges; while as for railroads, the nearest approach as late as 1860 was far-away Rolla. Yet, suddenly, as one may say, these wooded hills and rugged hollows, these rough and rocky solitudes, the banks of these swift streams accustomed to no sound save their own dashings, the passes in these unfrequented mountains, the scattered fields of a careless agriculture, the red roads that clambered up and down, the paths that threaded the brush and brake, the little prairies that stood like islands in the ocean of forest, were filled with armed men. Thousands of miles from the capitals of the contending governments; without cities to besiege or defend; without great rivers to open or close, or hold as highways; without strategic points of value to either force; without fertile fields or rich pastures—the supply-grounds of armies—to be guarded or fought for, this region, the obscure corners of three States and a Territory, became the scene of war—long, persistent, bloody; marked by the display of every heroic quality that can distinguish the human soul, and the commission of every fiendish crime that

can be conceived in a malignant heart and executed by a bloody and unsparing hand.

The forces which gathered in this region to do battle in open field or sudden ambush, made up the strangest mixture known in the annals of warfare. White men, red men and black men; regular soldiers and volunteers; Kansas borderers and Texas rangers; men from the Canadian frontier and men from the Mexican boundary, men from nearly every country in Europe, clad in every garb, armed with every weapon, marched and camped and fought and died in the "Battle Corners." With such combatants, a vast number of them irregulars; partisans who came and went; robbers who forsook their accustomed vocation of theft and murder to be soldiers and patriots on occasion; and in such a country, destitute of railroads and almost entirely without telegraph lines; with no great newspapers within a long and weary distance; with no regularly organized bureau of correspondence, the result in the shape of what is called recorded history has been meager and confused. Enough was done and suffered in a country where every old tree has its scar, and every ford of every mountain stream had its fight, to furnish many a winter's tale and grandame's legend, growing doubtless more fearful with each passing year; but of preserved and printed history, of critical analyses of campaigns, of military memoirs with maps and plans, there is and is likely to be very little. This does not diminish but rather increases the enchantment which time's distance lends to the view; and it may be that when the heavy volumes in which