



HISTORY
OF THE
ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIRST INDIANA
VOLUNTEER INFANTRY



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OF THE

One Hundred and Sixty-first

REGIMENT

INDIANA VOLUNTEER INFANTRY

By

W. E. BIEDERWOLF

CHAPLAIN OF THE REGIMENT

1899:

WILSON, HUMPHREYS & CO.

LOGANSPOUT, IND.



WILLIAM E. BIEDERWOLF.

Captain William Edward Biederwolf, chaplain of the regiment, offered his resignation to the Broadway Presbyterian church, in Logansport, Indiana, that he might go to



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care for the spiritual needs of the boys of the One Hundred and Sixty-first Indiana. He was born in the year of 1867, on September 29, at Monticello, Indiana. Graduating

from the high school of his native place, he taught school for one year, and then, in the fall of '86, entered Wabash College, Crawfordsville. After four years' work in this institution, he entered Princeton University, at Princeton, New Jersey. Upon graduation here, he began his theological course in the seminary of the same place, receiving his degree in 1895. After a year's evangelistic work with Rev. B. Fay Mills, the evangelist, in April, 1896, he was married to Miss Ida Casad, of Monticello, Indiana. They went at once to Germany, where for eighteen months he enjoyed the privilege of study in New Testament Greek, as Fellowship scholar from Princeton Theological Seminary. After traveling to the Holy Land he returned and accepted the pastorate of the Broadway Presbyterian church, in November, 1897. Captain Biederwolf, during his study at Princeton, devoted his vacations to rescue work in the slums of New York city. He is a lover of athletic sports, and was for four years a member of Princeton's athletic and gymnastic teams, and in other ways connected with her athletic interests. Chaplain Biederwolf took delight in his work and the men called him their friend.

Writing of a chaplain's work from an experimental and retrospective view point, one sees discouragements and hindrances unthought of at the initial stage of that experience, and which in spite of any further recognition of the man and his work which is justly due from the highest military authority must still depend for their alleviation upon circumstances of character with which the war department has nothing to do. The efficiency of the chaplain's work depends upon other things besides "what the chaplain makes it," which nothing but the grace of God can remedy. Some men have written that army life is a character moulder. 'Tis false—the drift, or better still the current, of army life is anti-moral and anti-religious; neither

space nor appropriateness of place permit any defense of this statement, but experience proves it in spite of exceptions. The chaplain of the One Hundred and Sixty-first is not elated over his work. He is, however, *on the whole* proud of the morale of the regiment it was his privilege to serve; it was as *good* as any and *better* than many, due more to the make-up of the men than to anything he was permitted to do. But he knows the ministrations in the hospital among the sick and the dying, the friendships with the men, the words of counsel and the utterances from the place of worship were not in vain, and that even results unseen below eternity will reveal in rich fruition.

And yet much of the chaplain's work does depend upon what he makes it and with this in mind early efforts were made to purchase a suitable tent for assembly purpose. Nearly all the towns from which the boys came donated liberally, a large 50 x 80 tent was purchased, and through help from the Christian Commission, furnished with an organ, with reading, games and writing material. At times peculiarly appropriate for letter writing, from six hundred to seven hundred letters a day were written from the tables of this tent. The first ten days in Jacksonville, nightly evangelistic services were held by Fred Schivera. Services were held every Sunday by the chaplain, usually morning and evening. An occasional concert given and such other meetings held as were legitimate for such a place. Elbert M. Blake, of Company K, was detailed to care for the tent and was a most valuable aid to the chaplain. After the severe storm the center piece was left out and the tent became circular with a fifty-foot diameter. At Savannah, Fred C. King, Company G, had charge of the work; in Cuba, Chas. Sheller, Company G, for one month, and John Coates, Company A, for a few weeks, when Mr. Blake was again put in charge.

Some of the most precious moments and glorious hours were those spent by the cot side of sick in the wards of the hospital.

There was much of this to do in Jacksonville and when the regiment left for Savannah, eighty-seven men were left behind in the tents of the Third Division Hospital. The chaplain was granted the privilege of staying with them, and the writing of letters for them, furnishing them with such delicacies as medical authority would allow, the moments of serious conversation and the bidding them good-bye as they were helped into the hospital trains bound for the north, were experiences for which one may well be grateful and feel that his ministry was worth its while.

It was hard to sympathize with many of the men who took up their lodgings in the quarters shown in the following cut. It was all voluntary, the men didn't have to go there, that is, at a period considerably prior to their registration, but when once there resolutions were readily made that they would never go again nor recommend its accommodations. These resolutions and promises, whose place if not the chaplain's to help the men to keep them, and as so many would have it that the building on opposite page and similar institutions belonged to the ecclesiastical department, its cut is appropriately and with pleasure inserted here.