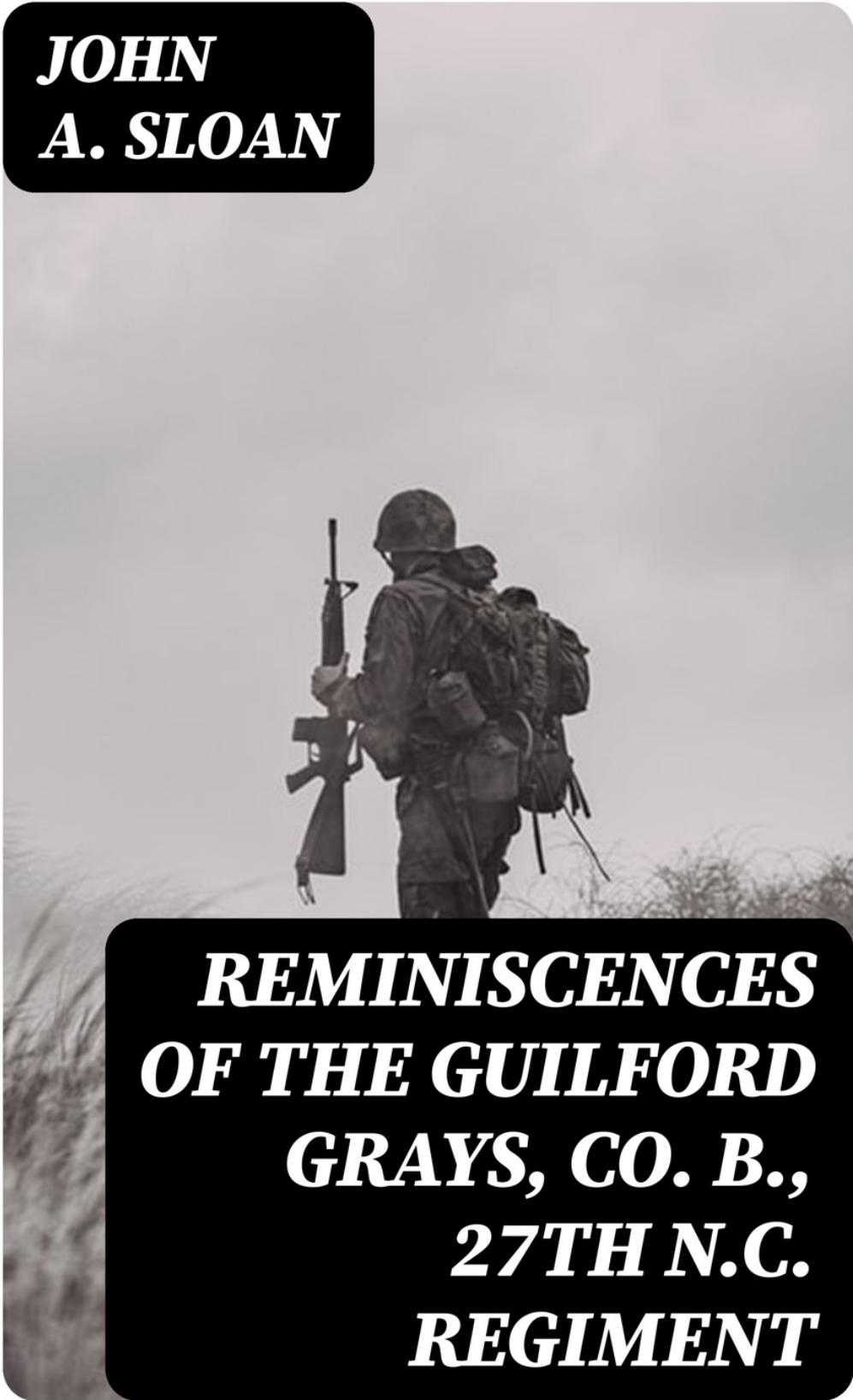


***JOHN
A. SLOAN***



***REMINISCENCES
OF THE GUILFORD
GRAYS, CO. B.,
27TH N.C.
REGIMENT***

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CHAPTER I.

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In the year eighteen hundred and sixty the military spirit was rife in the South. The clouds were threatening. No one knew what a day would bring forth. The organization, the equipment and drill of volunteer companies was, accordingly, the order of the times. The first assembly to perfect the organization of the Guilford Grays was held in the court-house in Greensboro, N.C., on the evening of the 9th of January, 1860. The meeting was presided over by General Joab Hiatt—now deceased—a favorite and friend of the young men. Gen. Hiatt won his military laurels as commander of the militia, in the piping times of peace. Whoever has seen him arrayed in the gorgeous uniform of a militia brigadier on the field of the general muster cannot fail to recall his commanding presence. He was the proper man to fill the chair at our first meeting. James W. Albright (who is still in the flesh) acted as secretary. The usual committees were appointed. A constitution and by-laws were drafted and adopted. The constitution provided for a volunteer company of infantry, to be known as the Guilford Grays. Each member was required to sign the constitution and by-laws. The following is a complete list of the signers, in the order of their signatures:

John A. Sloan, William P. Wilson, Thomas J. Sloan, Jos. M. Morehead, John Sloan, David Gundling, Henry C. Gorrel, William U. Steiner, Otto Huber, James R. Pearce, Jas. T. Morehead, Jr., P. B. Taylor, Chas. A. Campbell, J. H. Tarpley, William Adams, James W. Albright, Maben Lamb, James

Thomas, Edward G. Sterling, Jos. H. Fetzer, William P. Moring, Wilbur F. Owen, George H. Gregory, David N. Kirkpatrick, Andrew D. Lindsay, John Donnell, Benjamin G. Graham, W. W. Causey, William L. Bryan, Chas. E. Porter, John D. Smith, James R. Cole, John H. McKnight, Jed. H. Lindsay, Jr., W. C. Bourne, John A. Gilmer, Jr., Samuel B. Jordan.

The foregoing persons signed the constitution and by-laws on the 9th of January, 1860, when the company was first organized, and are entitled to the honor of being the "original panel."

The company was organized by the election of the following commissioned and non-commissioned officers, viz.:

John Sloan, Captain; William Adams, 1st Lieutenant; James T. Morehead, 2d Lieutenant; John A. Pritchett, 3d Lieutenant; Henry C. Gorrell, Ensign (with rank of Lieutenant); W. C. Bourne, Orderly Sergeant; William P. Wilson, 2d Sergeant; Samuel B. Jordan, 3d Sergeant; Geo. W. Howlett, 4th Sergeant; Thos. J. Sloan, Corporal; Benjamin G. Graham, 2d Corporal; George H. Gregory, 3d Corporal; Silas C. Dodson, 4th Corporal.

The following musicians were selected from the colored troops:

Jake Mebane, fifer; Bob Hargrove, kettle-drummer; Cæsar Lindsay, base-drummer.

The anniversary of the battle of Guilford Court-House is an honored day among the people of old Guilford. It was the turning point in the future of Lord Cornwallis. When the Earl of Chatham heard the defeat announced in the House of Parliament, he exclaimed: "One more such victory would

ruin the British." This battle was fought by General Greene on the 15th of March, 1781. On this anniversary, the 15th of March, 1860, our officers received their commissions from Governor Ellis. This is the date of our formal organization.

Friday night of each week was set apart for the purpose of drill and improvement. Our drill-room was in the second story of Tate's old cotton factory, where we were instructed in the various manœuvres and evolutions, as then laid down in Scott's tactics.

Early in April we received our arms, consisting of fifty stand of old flint-and-steel, smooth-bore muskets, a species of ordnance very effective at the breech. They were supposed to have descended from 1776, and to have been wrested by order of the Governor from the worms and rust of the Arsenal at Fayetteville. By the first of May we had received our handsome gray uniforms from Philadelphia. These uniforms, which we so gaily donned and proudly wore, consisted of a frock coat, single-breasted, with two rows of State buttons, pants to match, with black stripe, waist belt of black leather, cross belt of white webbing, gray cap with pompon.

Our first public parade was a day long to be remembered. It occurred on the 5th day of May, 1860. The occasion was the coronation of a May queen in the grove at Edgeworth Female Seminary. The Grays were invited by the ladies to lend their presence at the celebration, and it was whispered that we were to be the recipients of a banner.

It will be readily imagined that we were transported with the anticipation of so joyous a day. We did our best to make ourselves perfect in the drill and manual—for would not all

eyes be upon us? The day came at last, and at 10 a.m. we assembled in front of the court-house. The roll was called and no absentees noted. The uniforms were immaculate, our officers wore the beautiful swords presented to them by the fair ladies of Greensboro Female College, the musket barrels and bayonets flashed and gleamed in the glorious May sunshine, and with high heads in jaunty caps, and with the proud military step, as we supposed it ought to be, we marched now in single file, and now in platoons, down the street towards the Edgeworth grounds, keeping time to the music of "Old Jake," whose "spirit-stirring fife" never sounded shriller, and whose *rainbow-arched* legs never bore him with such grandeur.

When we arrived at our destination, we found the beautiful green grounds, which were tastefully decorated, already filled with happy spectators. The young ladies, whose guests we were to be, were formed in procession, and were awaiting the arrival of the Queen and her suite. The appearance of this distinguished cortege on the scene was the signal for the procession to move.

The following was the order of procession:

First. Fourteen of her maids of honor.

Second. Ten Floras, with baskets of flowers, which they scattered in the pathway.

Third. Sceptre and crown-bearer.

Fourth. The Queen, with Lady Hope and the Archbishop on either side.

Fifth. Two maids of honor.

Sixth. Ten pages.

Seventh. The Military (Grays).

As the Queen advanced to the throne, erected in the centre of the grove, the young ladies greeted her with the salutation:

"You are the fairest, and of beauty rarest,
And you our Queen shall be."

Lady Hope (Miss Mary Arendell) addressed the Queen:

"O, maiden fair, with light brown hair!"

The Archbishop (Miss Hennie Erwin) then proceeded to the crowning ceremony, and Miss Mary Morehead was crowned Queen of May.

After these pleasant and ever-to-be-remembered ceremonies, the Queen (Miss Mamie) in the name of the ladies of the seminary, presented to the Grays a handsome silk flag, in the following happy speech:

"In the name of my subjects, the fair donors of Edgeworth, I present this banner to the Guilford Grays. Feign would we have it a "banner of peace," and have inscribed upon its graceful folds "peace on earth and goodwill to man;" for our womanly natures shrink from the horrors of war and bloodshed. But we have placed upon it the "oak," fit emblem of the firm heroic spirits over which it is to float. Strength, energy, and decision mark the character of the sons of Guilford, whose noble sires have taught their sons to know but one fear—the fear of doing wrong." * * * * *

Cadet R. O. Sterling, of the N.C. Military Institute, received the banner at the hands of the Queen, and, advancing, placed it in the hands of Ensign H. C. Gorrell, who accepted the trust as follows:

"Most noble Queen, on the part of the Guilford Grays I accept this beautiful banner, for which I tender the thanks of those whom I represent. Your majesty calls to remembrance the days of 'Auld Lang Syne,' when the banners of our country proudly and triumphantly waved over our own battle-field, and when our fathers, on the soil of old Guilford, 'struck for their altars and their fires.' Here, indeed, was fought the great battle of the South; here was decided the great struggle of the Revolution; here was achieved the great victory of American over British generalship; here was evidenced the great military talent and skill of Nathaniel Greene, the blacksmith boy, whose immortal name our town bears.

"If any earthly pride be justifiable, are not the sons of Guilford entitled to entertain it? If any spot on earth be appropriate for the presentation of a "banner of peace," where will you find it, if it be not here, five miles from the battle-field of Martinsville; here at Guilford Court-House in the boro of Nathaniel Greene; here in the classic grounds of old Edgeworth, surrounded with beauty and intelligence; in the presence of our wives, our sisters, and our sweethearts. And who could more appropriately present this banner than your majesty and her fair subjects? You are the daughter of a Revolutionary mother to whom we would render all the honor due—

'No braver dames had Sparta,
No nobler matrons Rome.
Then let us laud and honor them,
E'en in their own green homes.'

"They have passed from the stage of earthly action, and while we pay to their memories the grateful tribute of a sigh, we would again express our thanks to their daughters for this beautiful banner, and as a token of our gratitude, we, the Guilford Grays, do here beneath its graceful folds pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor, and swear for them to live, them to love, and, if need be, for them to die.

"Noble Queen, we render to you, and through you to your subjects, our hearty, sincere, and lasting thanks for this entertainment; and to the rulers, in your vast domain, for the privilege of trespassing upon their provinces which lie under their immediate supervision.

"In time of war, or in time of peace, in prosperity or adversity, we would have you ever remember the Guilford Grays—for be assured your memories will ever be cherished by them."

This beautiful banner was designed by Dr. D. P. Weir and executed in Philadelphia—the size is 6 feet by 5, being made of heavy blue silk. On the one side is a painting in oils, representing the coat-of-arms of North Carolina encircled by a heavy wreath of oak leaves and acorns. Above is a spread eagle with scroll containing the motto, "E Pluribus Unum," a similar scroll below with words, "Greensboro, North Carolina." The other side, similar in design, except within the wreath the words, "Presented by the Ladies of Edgeworth Female Seminary, May 5th, 1860;" on the scroll above, "Guilford Grays," and on scroll below, "Organized March 5th, 1860," all edged with heavy yellow silk fringe, cord and tassel blue and gold, the staff of ebony,

surmounted with a heavily plated battle axe. This flag is still preserved and in the writer's possession.

CHAPTER II.

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More than a year in advance of the National Paper, attributed to Mr. Jefferson, the people of Mecklenburg County declared themselves a free people and took the lead in throwing off the British yoke. On the 4th day of July, 1776, the National Declaration, adopting (?) some of the language of the Mecklenburg convention, "rang out" the glad tidings "that these United Colonies are, and, of right, ought to be, *free and independent States.*"

To celebrate the "glorious fourth," the good people of Alamance County unveiled and dedicated a monument at Alamance church to the memory of Colonel Arthur Forbis, a gallant officer of the North Carolina troops, who fell mortally wounded at the battle of Guilford, March 25th, 1781. By invitation of the committee—Rev. C. H. Wiley and Dr. D. P. Weir—the Grays participated. Invitations of this kind were never declined. The day was intensely hot, and the distance from Greensboro being too far for a march in those days, wagons were furnished for our transportation. The exercises of the occasion were opened with prayer by Rev. E. W. Caruthers. He was followed by Gov. John M. Morehead, who, taking the sword which the brave Forbis had carried while he was an officer, with it lifted the veil from the monument. The Governor's remarks were just such as those who knew him would have expected of him. The exercises were closed by Rev. Samuel Paisley, that venerable man of God. The Grays, after firing a salute and performing such duties as

were required, returned to Greensboro, having spent an interesting "fourth."

On the 1st of October, in the same year, we visited by invitation the Orange Guards, a military organization at Hillsboro, N.C. The occasion was their fifth anniversary. We took the morning train to Hillsboro, and in a few hours reached our destination. We found the Guards at the depot awaiting our arrival. Lieutenant John W. Graham, on behalf of the Guards, received us with a most cordial welcome. Lieutenant James T. Morehead, Jr., responded upon the part of the Grays. We were then escorted to quarters, which were prepared for us, at the Orange Hotel, where we enjoyed the delicacies, luxuries, and liquids so bountifully "set out" at this famed hostelry, then presided over by the genius of Messrs. Hedgpeth and Stroud. In the afternoon we were escorted to the Hillsboro Military Institute, and gave the young gentlemen there an opportunity of observing our *superior* skill, both in the manual and the evolutions. At night the chivalry and beauty of "ye ancient borough" assembled in the Odd Fellows' hall to do us honor at a ball,

"And then the viols played their best;
Lamps above and laughs below.
Love me sounded like a jest,
Fit for yes, or fit for no."

As Aurora began to paint the East in rosy colors of the dawn, we boarded the train for home. Some with aching heads, some with aching hearts.

The Orange Guards were closely and intimately associated with us during the entire four years of the war.

We entered the service about the same time, at the same place, and served in the same regiment. Our friendships were there renewed, and many, so many, are the memories sweet and sad, which we mutually share. Our marches, our wants, our abundance, our sorrows, and our rejoicings—each and all, they were common to us both. In love and allegiance to our native State we marched forth to take our places among her gallant sons, be it for weal or woe; hand-in-hand together till Appomattox Court-House, we struggled and endured. There like a vesture no longer for use, we folded and laid away our tattered and battle-stained banner, to be kept forever sacred, in the sepulchre of a lost cause.

My diary intimates no occasion for even a "skirmish" until the 22d of February, 1861, when we again donned the gray to honor the memory of "George W." and his little hatchet. We were entertained during the day with an address at the court-house by Jas. A. Long, Esq., on the all-absorbing *question* of the times.

The Congress of the United States had assembled as usual in December, and was at this time in session. The clouds surcharged with sectional hate and political fanaticism were now lowering over us, and the distant mutterings of that storm which had been heard so long, and against which the wise and patriotic had given solemn warning, foreboded evil times. South Carolina had already, on the 20th of December, adopted her ordinance of secession; Mississippi on the 9th of January; Florida followed on the 10th, Alabama on the 11th, Georgia on the 18th, Louisiana on the 26th, and Texas on the 1st of February.