

Earthquakes in the Mississippi Valley

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the republication of their war records. In this patriotic work Iowa should be a leader, not a follower at the end of the procession.

Not only should the editing be done by the most capable man in Iowa, but the books should be brought out in the best style of the art of printing at this time. When the volumes appear they should be such that every Iowan will be proud of them. Aside from the records of the civil war, the volumes should contain the rosters of all the smaller commands that were raised in Iowa in territorial times, to hold the Indians in check, or to protect the frontier settlers. There were several such commands of which no record exists in the State of Iowa, except that compiled by Harvey Reid of Maquoketa from the recollections of a participant in the command which removed the Winnebago Indians from Iowa to Minnesota. It is not practicable to secure within the State of Iowa any record of the names of the men who volunteered for the Mexican war. The information required is in the War Department at Washington, and nowhere else. It should be faithfully copied and printed here. The volumes should include the officers and men of the Spirit Lake Expedition, the Northern Border Brigade, and the soldiers who served in the Spanish and Philippine wars. The memory of every man who shouldered a musket or drew a sword in the Territory or State of Iowa in response to any of these patriotic calls, should be perpetuated through the publication of these precious records.

EARTHQUAKES IN THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

Few residents of Iowa, perhaps none, who read the dispatches relating to the terrible wreckage of life and property following the recent earthquakes in California and Chili considered the possibility of such a convulsion here in this region of long rolling prairies and low, far-reaching valleys. No more doubtless did they regard such a calamity as even a remote possibility within the reaches of the Mississippi valley. Ordinarily there is no wit or wisdom in borrowing trouble. On

the other hand, it is just as well to realize that the inhabitants of this mid-continental region have in not remote times suffered severely from seismic shocks. It may not be generally known that in one instance the series of shocks is pronounced by the scientific authorities of our National Geological Survey to have been "the greatest earthquake our country has experienced since its settlement," not even excepting the destructive shock at Charlestown, in 1886, or the recent terrifying manifestation at San Francisco. Moreover, the center of that shock was not far removed from the borders of Iowa and our own area probably came within the circumference of the disturbance.

Readers of the annals of the early settlement of the West, especially of Illinois and Missouri, frequently come upon references to or descriptions of a terrible commotion of the earth that culminated in the neighborhood of New Madrid in southeastern Missouri, a few miles below the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. All contemporary accounts concur in ascribing extraordinary violence to its manifestations and vast area to the region affected. The chroniclers are not in agreement as to the precise time of its occurrence. Governor John Reynolds of Illinois had personal experience of the shocks and in his autobiography states that they began about 2 o'clock in the morning of Nov. 11, 1811. Audubon, the naturalist, says that he was traveling across the "Barrens" of Kentucky in November, and "one afternoon" suddenly became aware that some disturbance was imminent and almost immediately witnessed fearful earth waves that utterly bewildered him. The English geologist and traveler Featherstonehaugh, who visited the region around about New Madrid in 1834, says in his Travels that the earthquake took place in December, and Mr. Fuller of our National Geological Survey gives December 16 as the date. "The vibrations," says the latter, "did not cease for over a year. * * * During the succeeding three months 1,874 shocks were recorded, of which eight were violently destructive, ten very severe, and thirty-five generally alarming. In fact, this earthquake is famous all over the world as one of the few instances of almost

incessant shaking for a period of many months in a region remote from the seat of any volcanic action."

Featherstonehaugh describes the region about New Madrid as a "flat alluvial area without a vestige of rocky strata, many parts generally well wooded, but containing two or three prairies of about five miles square where cotton and Indian corn are cultivated." Such a region does not suggest seismic or volcanic disturbances, nevertheless the pioneers witnessed some terrific events. Their ears were deafened by loud crashing reports that resembled heavy cannonading. Sulphurous vapors rolled over the land. Besides the horrible earth waves that must have almost shattered the nervous systems of man and beast alike—immense chasms opened in the earth whence issued dense vapors and torrents of water. The beds of lakes and swamps were upheaved and fertile fields of large area sunk and became lakes, varying in depth from four to 100 feet. In the Mississippi, islands sank out of sight, and the upheaval and subsidence of the waters of the river produced a fearful surge that was like the fateful return of the ruthless ocean tides that follow earthquakes along the seaboard.

Governor Reynolds tells us that shocks continued to be experienced for years after throughout southern Illinois; he records one in 1855 at the time he was writing. Writing in response to our inquiry, Mr. H. C. Rizer, of the National Geological Survey informs the writer that "slight shocks originating in the New Madrid region occur several times annually, and could be detected by instruments in Illinois and probably even in Iowa. You may possibly recall that quite a severe shock occurred last summer in this region." Our sympathy with the sufferers in San Francisco may well be tinged with prudent considerations for contingencies in our own habitat.

H.

RIFLE AND TELEPHONE.

A most interesting object lesson may be seen in the hospitable home of Mr. George C. Duffield, a pioneer farmer and octogenarian who comes down from the days of Black Hawk and Keokuk, and who resides on the right bank of the Des

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