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Basil Wilson Duke

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Excerpt from Reminiscences of General Basil W. Duke, C. S. A

The reminiscences contained in this volume, of the Civil War and the period just preceding it, were, most of them, written for the Home and Farm, of Louisville, and with no thought at first of their publication other than in that paper. They are compiled and published in more permanent form in deference to the wishes of a number of those who read them when they originally appeared.

They can scarcely be regarded as positive contributions to the history, so much as attempts to describe incidents characteristic of the period and its potential thought and feeling; but may help to illustrate some things which graver historical recital will expound when the time has come to construct the fabric of history with the material provided by the chroniclers. In writing them I had chiefly in mind the experiences of the soldier, the atmosphere of the camp, the gossip of the bivouac.

The history of no period can be justly written - certainly the character and meaning of no struggle which is in effect a social or political revolution can be correctly and graphically portrayed - unless the conditions of the times, the habits of thought then prevailing, and the predominant sentiment which influenced or incited popular action, be taken into account.

To no important and striking epoch of modern history is this rule of historical narration more applicable than to our great civil conflict - "the war between the states." For the treatment of this subject an abundance of the material ordinarily employed in historical composition has already been supplied. The "historical facts" have, in so far as such a thing is possible, been ascertained and agreed on. The writers on both sides of the controversy have been industrious in proclaiming all that investigation or research could procure. No document or declaration, perhaps, of the kind usually termed historical, has been overlooked; and ingenious use has been made of the results so obtained, in support of each contention.

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