



Leander Stillwell THE STORY OF A COMMON SOLDIER

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***The Story of a Common Soldier
of Army Life in the Civil War, 1861-1865***

by Leander Stillwell (1843-1934)

Leander Stillwell was an 18-year-old Illinois farm boy, living with his family in a log cabin, when the Civil War broke out. Stillwell felt a duty “to help save the Nation;” but, as with many other young men, his Patriotism was tinged with bravura: “the idea of staying at home and turning over senseless clods on the farm with the cannon thundering so close at hand . . . was simply intolerable.” Stillwell volunteered for the 61st Illinois Infantry in January 1861. His youthful enthusiasm for the soldier’s life was soon tempered at Shiloh, where he first “saw a gun fired in anger,” and “saw a man die a violent death.”

The Story of a Common Soldier is a compelling coming of age tale that will appeal not only to Civil War buffs but to anyone who enjoys autobiographies. Written when Stillwell was a mature man—a lawyer, judge, and member of the Kansas legislature, it combines graphic detail (provided by his war diary and letters) with the insights of a thoughtful man looking back on those horrific times.

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Read by Sue Anderson

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