Buck of the regular army, Major Waldo G. Hansen, quartermaster of the soldiers' home at Waupaca, Wis., and Col. Rolf Rosman. Beloit is also the home of Brig. Gen. William S. Wood, a graduate of West Point, who formerly commanded the 57th Field Artillery brigade. There is also my nephew, Lt. Col. John W. Thompson of the regular army, now stationed in the Philippines.

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In closing my survey of the military annals of Beloit, I think it would be fitting to pay tribute to one of the highest ranking officers in the American Army. He was born in Rock county only five miles west of Beloit. He was never a resident of Beloit, as his family moved to Clinton, Iowa, so that really became his home town. I refer to Major General William D. Connor. General Connor was born February 22, 1874, on a farm in the town of Newark near the Baptist church. In 1893 he went to West Point and graduated in 1897 and entered the army. Appointed a 2nd lieutenant of engineers, General Connor served in the Philippine insurrection and was an instructor at West Point in 1904.

In 1917 he was ordered to France and served through the war with distinction, being decorated six times. After the armistice, when General Pershing returned to America, General Connor was commander in chief of the forces of occupation in Germany. After the war he served in Hawaii and China. In 1932 he was ordered to West Point as superintendent of the academy, where he stayed until 1938 when he reached the retirement age. All his distinguished services are too numerous to give a full account of them here. While he was in France he was for a time chief of staff of the 32nd Division in the trench operations in the Belfort sector.

While he never was a citizen of Beloit, we feel a great interest in his distinguished career, from the fact that his birthplace is so near our city limits. Mrs. Frank Millen, 2004 Riverside Drive, is his first cousin.

Chapter 31

The Thompson family has in the years gone by a number of times entertained some distinguished foreigners. Along about 1881 or 82 the great Norwegian dramatist, poet and statesman, Bjornstjerne Bjornson, was on a tour of the United States and came to Beloit and gave a lecture in the Goodwin opera house. He had a great audience and spoke in Norwegian. But even though they could not understand a word that he spoke there were quite a few native-born people who attended. They wanted to see the noted man. I remember Miss Hazard, a teacher at the high school, was among the number.

Bjornson was entertained by my father and mother in our home at 643 Bluff st.

A year or two later another Norwegian poet and novelist, Kristoffer Janssen, visited America and came to Beloit and was likewise entertained at our house. I asked them to write something for me in my autograph album, which they both did. Bjornson was a large man, with a strong, massive face, and a great shock of hair. He had the appearance of a lion. He devoted his life and writings to the cause of liberty and emancipation from old time conventions and class distinctions. Janssen was a milder man and yet a fine and distinguished writer.

* * *

When the great Arctic explorer, Roald Amundson, was here some years ago, and lectured at the First Congregational church, Mrs. Thompson and I entertained him at our house. We found him most interesting. He spoke English well but preferred talking Norwegian when we were by ourselves. He is the only man who reached both the North and South Poles. He lost his life, as everyone knows, in his attempt to go to the rescue of the Italian Colonel Nobile.
Quite recently a Norwegian professor from the University of Oslo, Norway, was in America lecturing at colleges and universities on his pet racial theories, the long heads, the round heads and the Mediterraneans. He lectured at the college chapel. We entertained him at dinner that evening. I recall how surprised he was that many years ago we had also entertained Bjornson and Janssen.

While discussing distinguished people I want to tell a little about an event that occurred about 1915. In those days we had an organization in Beloit called the Six O’clock club. It was a group of citizens who met once a month to discuss city affairs and other questions of the day. We met in church basements or some hall for supper and after that came the speeches. There was a program committee for each season who were to arrange for speakers. One year I was on the committee along with the Rev. Mr. Stevens and Judge Clark. I admit now I proposed some rather radical men, among whom was the noted Scott Nearing. The rest of the committee concurred. Nearing came and gave a talk which did not at all fit in with our ultra-conservative type of listeners, and the next day Mr. Stevens came out in the press and denounced the speech as unpatriotic, etc., and said he would not be held as approving such sentiments and repudiated any responsibility for the program. Judge Clark also called me down. I wrote a reply in the News, and said I would assume full responsibility, etc., as the speech coincided very much with my own views at the time. That ended it.

I have never had or experienced any particularly thrilling events in my life. On the contrary my life has been rather uneventful and as ordinary as that of most men. Of course I have pleasant memories of my two trips to Europe, but I think the nearest thing to a thrill came to me some eight or 10 years ago when I received a personally written letter from Queen Marie of Rumania and an autographed photograph. It arrived by registered mail with the royal crest on the envelope.

It came about like this. You all remember some time ago when the Saturday Evening Post published “The Story of My Life” by Queen Marie. I read it with great interest. When it was finished I wrote a letter telling her of my having read the articles, and how interested all we plain Americans had been in reading the intimate details of royal life, not only of the pomp and glamour, but of the inner homelife of the household, of the trials with cooks, servants, tutors and such like. I dwelt on her English prose and of her marriage and journey to a far-off land, and thanked her for the pleasure she had given me. Don’t you think a queen is just as human as other folks and finds it a pleasure to receive a token of appreciation even from a citizen of a democratic country like America?

I addressed the letter “Queen Marie, Bucharest, Rumania” and wondered if it would reach her royal hand. In the short period of three weeks, I received a reply in very gracious and cordial terms. That, I say, was a real adventure.

Queen Marie was a granddaughter on her father’s side of Queen Victoria and on her mother’s side of Czar Alexander III of Russia. I have always been sorry that her son, King Carol, turned out to be such a bad actor.

Chapter 32

In 1893 we had the stock market crash in Wall Street and business came to a standstill. Factories shut down or ran very light for several years because of lack of orders. The farm implement business was hard hit as dealers were afraid and would not buy, so our factory was running light. For this reason I thought it would be a good time to take a vacation. So my brother Ed, and I went on a bicycle tour through England and Scotland and southern Norway.

We landed in Liverpool. We first