

## AN ECHO FROM SPIRIT LAKE.

*The Fort Dodge Chronicle* has of late been publishing extracts from a diary left by the late Major William Williams of Fort Dodge, the distinguished pioneer who commanded the Expedition to Spirit Lake against the Indians in 1857. This same work, it has been stated to us, was published many years ago, or portions of it at least, in *The Fort Dodge Northwest*. Among a great deal of truthful and interesting matter which is historically valuable, "the old Major" states that an effort was made by Hon. Messrs. John F. Duncombe and Samuel Rees to induce the State legislature to pay the Spirit Lake soldiers for their patriotic and humane services, and that this effort was opposed by Col. John Scott of Story county and Charles Aldrich of Hamilton county—and the parties named are characterized by sundry descriptive words more forcible than polite. These reflections upon Scott and Aldrich, were, as we are informed, included in the previous publication of Major Williams' diary, though we did not happen to see them. As Major Williams died many years ago we shall not further characterize this statement than by setting it down as an error—a slip of the pen made easy by the political acrimony pervading northwestern Iowa in those days. Col. John Scott and Charles Aldrich were radical republicans—"black republicans," as anti-slavery men were called in those days—while Major Williams was a democrat of the school of James Buchanan. That sufficiently explains the feeling with which he wrote. Except as it may be possibly resurrected at some future time, and found uncontradicted, this statement is of little consequence. Had it come to the knowledge of Hon. John F. Duncombe we do not believe he would have consented to this recent publication, but the fact that his sons—grandsons of Major Williams—have seen fit to present it to their readers, would seem to justify this word of absolute contradiction. When Mr. Aldrich came to Webster City to establish *The Freeman* newspaper, in May, 1857, the men of the expedition were about town still suffering from the effects of frost-bites and severe

exposure. The people were mourning the loss of the gallant Capt. J. C. Johnson, who had been frozen to death on the return march. One of the first things to which Mr. Aldrich turned his attention was procuring and publishing in *The Freeman* an excellent account of the expedition, from the pen of Sergeant Harry Hoover—the same that appears in Mrs. Gardner-Sharp's book, but curiously enough credited to another paper. He also secured the erection of a beautiful brass tablet in the court-house at Webster City some years ago, which names and thereby compliments Major Williams, with other Spirit Lake heroes. Mr. A. was a member of the commission which erected the imposing and beautiful monument at Lake Okoboji, in 1894. To him was assigned the work of preparing the inscriptions for the four large tablets, and at his suggestion, and by his insistence, a complete roster of the command of Major Williams fills the large tablet on the west side. At the request of Mr. Aldrich Gov. Carpenter wrote for these pages a most appreciative biographical sketch of Major Williams. That Mr. Aldrich has done everything in his power during these forty years to honor and reward the officers and men of that expedition is well known in northwestern Iowa, and he is unwilling that this slander shall longer go without contradiction. Otherwise, enterprising journalists, and possibly grandchildren farther removed, may hereafter unearth it and publish it again and again. And then, there is the further danger that the story may increase in length, breadth and thickness, as such things sometimes do. As to Col. John Scott, the Senate Journal of 1860 shows that he attempted to amend the bill so as to secure the money appropriated to the men who carried the rifles and shot-guns, instead of allowing it to go to claim agents and speculators. On page 370 of the Journal a committee of which he was chairman, said in their report "the passage of the bill is warmly commended." The roll-call on its passage (p. 373) shows that Col. Scott voted in the affirmative. There were but two votes against it. The House Journal (p. 171) re-

cords its passage by a unanimous vote of that body. The fact is, *everybody favored and nobody opposed this meritorious bill* (House File No. 60).

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### SLAVERY LEGISLATION IN IOWA.

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There was presented in the last number of *THE ANNALS* (pp. 145-147) "an act to regulate Blacks and Mulattoes," which was passed by our first Territorial legislature and approved by Gov. Lucas. We can find no law by which it was ever directly repealed, but it would seem practically to have been a dead letter from the first. In the changed sentiment of these times such a law would be universally regarded as nothing less than infamous. It is a veritable curiosity, and might well be included by Dr. Shambaugh among his "materials for history." Men are now living to whom such laws were familiar—for they existed in many Northern States; yet, to the thoughts and feelings of the generation which now rules this country, the impulses which inspired them are as far removed and as much out of date—as foreign to the thoughts of the people—as the events which led to the war for American Independence. The great statesmen who became famous—whose names were "familiar as household words"—from their warfare upon slavery, are but seldom mentioned in these days. Their names are well-nigh forgotten by the mass of their countrymen, and their patriotic and humane labors, which were deemed herculean in their day, only possess interest to the students of history. Mould is fast gathering upon their memories. Even the god-like Charles Sumner is seldom referred to, and the great edition of his speeches and writings, which he supervised with such scholarly care, receives little attention in the public libraries.

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### A VALUABLE DONATION.

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Hon. Theodore S. Parvin quite recently sent to the Historical Department thirty bound volumes of early Iowa newspapers which thus become the property of the State.

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