

Annals Addenda . . .

AN IOWA EMANCIPATOR

When Maj. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge was called from his army duties in the south in May, 1863, to report to General Grant and President Lincoln, at Washington, he felt apprehension that he might be criticised for something done trying to bring the Civil war to a close; and particularly for having had a part in organizing Negro companies of soldiers to fight for the Union. On the contrary he found that President Lincoln wanted primarily to discuss with him the location of the eastern terminus of the railroad that was to span the western continent.

It appears that somewhere down in Georgia, Colonel Cornyn of the U. S. army had a spat with one Colonel Biffles of the C. S. army, as result of which the former wrote the latter as of date, Savannah, May 30, 1863, as follows:

Your pompous demand for the surrender of one squadron of cavalry (the 15th Illinois regiment) occupying this place, and your cowardly retreat before you received Captain Carmichael's intrepid reply, suggested to me the propriety of visiting upon the traitor citizens here (who tried to assist you in the capture of that gallant little band) a little of the legitimate vengeance of my Government. Therefore, in the name of our glorious Republic, I hereby make good the grand exordium of the Declaration of Independence, i. e., "that all men are created free and equal," and today I free and take with me from this town every colored creature who inherits with the human race everywhere the image of his maker and an immortal soul.

There was a loud outcry, as a matter of course, and demand voiced in the press for the hanging of Colonel Cornyn and General Dodge, if they could be captured. General Dodge took his command west from Georgia, and he left the following account of what happened:

When my command turned to return to Corinth it seemed as though every Negro in that broad and fertile Tennessee valley followed us. They came with their families, loaded in all kinds of vehicles that they took from their masters—coaches, carriages

farm wagons—with mules, oxen and cows hitched to them. They were the most motley and picturesque crowd that I ever saw, and it was estimated there were over 2,000. They made a column two miles long and I was at my wit's end what to do with them. When we reached Corinth I camped them on an abandoned plantation near our entrenchments, placed over them the chaplain, Alexander, of the 27th Ohio infantry, and guarded them with details from the command. The white soldiers objected to guarding Negroes and several conflicts ensued when our sentinels shot one or two of the contrabands.

Chaplain Alexander said to me that if I would furnish him arms and equipment he would raise two companies of Negroes to watch and guard the camp. There was no authority for this and the ordnance officer would not issue the arms, but would deliver them to Chaplain Alexander on my order, which I gave and this solved the problem. The families were put to work on abandoned plantations to raise their own food. The friction with the white soldiers was avoided, but my action in arming Negroes and the fear of them in that part of the country, caused constant criticism and was reported to Washington, but General Oglesby, my commander, approved my action but made no report upon it.

The sequel to this, of course is well known to all familiar with the story of the war for preservation of the Union, but the part of General Dodge is not so well remembered. Soon after, Gen. Lorenzo Thomas visited Corinth and held a meeting where he disclosed his plan to enlist Negroes for service. General Dodge also spoke at the meeting in approval. This aroused great indignation in the south. General Dodge follows up the story thus:

The Confederate authorities raised the question of the treatment of Negro soldiers when captured. They indicated that they did not treat them as prisoners of war. Our government immediately made known its policies, to the effect that they would retaliate for any cruelties or any treatment of those prisoners different from white soldiers. Finally on June 11th a test case came when a Negro lieutenant and twelve enlisted men, who, they claimed, had committed depredations and arrested citizens, were captured at Grand Gulf and were taken to Jackson, Mississippi. There was a great deal of excitement and threatening to administer the lynch law to them, but under the direction of the Confederate administration they were turned over to the military forces to be dealt with, as they claimed to be United

States troops, and were treated as prisoners of war. This occurred at the capital of the president's own state and settled the policy toward Negro troops.

As the Federal army was pretty close to the land of slavery the enlistment of Negro volunteers went on rapidly. General Dodge in his memoirs told of results:

On June 16th the First regiment of Alabama cavalry, A. D. had become fully organized and were mustered into the service, mustering about 900 men, and they were as fine a body of men as I ever saw. The organizing of these regiments gave me a great opportunity to reward enlisted men and officers in my command who had distinguished themselves. I took the field officers for this regiment from commanding officers in the companies, while the captains and lieutenants I selected from non-commissioned officers who were recommended to me as being very competent and they proved themselves to be so. This regiment had built large and commodious barracks and were being thoroughly drilled; and upon the mustering of the regiment, we immediately started recruiting the Second Alabama infantry A. D.

There was a great change in the sentiment of the army after they saw this regiment organized, drilled and on duty, and there were a great many applications to me from officers in the white regiment for authority to recruit other regiments. The regular white troops at Corinth obtained a set of colors and they were presented to the regiment by Col. M. M. Bane of the 50th Illinois infantry. His speech to the regiment was eloquent and pathetic, urging them to defend their colors to the last extremity. Two colored soldiers responded, fixing the attention of all who could hear. One had made his way to Corinth over 200 miles only a few weeks ago. Among other most appropriate and witty remarks he said to his colored friends that they had often heard of the old banner, and longed for the freedom it promised; and although they could not deny having had plenty of "stripes" they had certainly never before received the "stars." These colors, he exhorted his fellow-soldiers to bear aloft, never allowing their rebellious masters to trail them in the dust. Col. (James B.) Weaver, of the Second Iowa infantry, also spoke very eloquently, telling the colored soldiers that since their masters had given them "stripes" it had now come their turn to make them see "stars."

Not all of the worries of an emancipating army came from the colored part of the population. General Dodge and his associates had trouble with many who sought to escape to the freer states. He wrote:

In addition to the great number of Negroes who flocked into Corinth there also came a very large number of white refugees from the northern part of Alabama and Tennessee. They were all loyal and able-bodied men and they entered the First Alabama infantry, but left the women and children for us to support. I could not take care of them at Corinth, but I raised an assessment from the sympathizers of the rebellion and southern people, quite a sum of money, and sent them north to be disposed of among the loyal people there. General Buford was in command at Cairo and he distributed some 500 of these women and children, sending them to Quincy, Decatur and Centralia, Illinois. The mayor of Centralia on June 24th wrote a letter to General Buford as follows:

By what authority do you force upon the people of Centralia the one hundred and twenty paupers you sent here by yesterday's train? You are respectfully requested to arrange their transportation south. SAMUEL STORER, Mayor.

Gen. Buford, who was a very sympathetic and loyal man sent the following letter from me:

I send you five hundred women and children refugees from the south. They are loyal people. Their husbands, fathers and brothers are in our army doing their duty, and I ask as a favor to me as well as a justice to them, that they be made comfortable and settled in the northern states. It will be well for them to scatter to the different towns where they have friends.

They have already suffered more than death and have been kicked about till they are disheartened, many of them to die. I could tell tales of their suffering under Jeff Davis' tyranny that would make every loyal man and woman's heart bleed, but all they now ask is a place where they can live comfortably and in peace until the war closes and their protectors can join them. I once more bespeak for them your well known kindness and efficient aid. I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant. G. M. DODGE, Brig. Gen.

The action of the mayor of Centralia brought down upon his head the severe denunciation and criticism of the entire north, and there came applications from the different towns for such refugees to be sent to them and from that time on we had no trouble in locating them and relieving our front of their charge.

It was at this time that some of the friends of General Dodge proposed that he be nominated for governor of Iowa, and he would have been nominated but that others closer to him gave assurance that under no circumstances would the general accept such nomination. His attitude in the matter of handling refugees of both races was known and approved in his home state.

JAKE PERKINS TO ROTARIANS

One of the midwest's picturesque literary figures came to town the other day to address the Rotarians . . . Fifty years a preacher, J. R. Perkins of Council Bluffs, Ia., is the author of the best selling "The Emperor's Physician" and "Antioch Actress," and now, at the age of not quite 70, he is working on a third novel . . . In between times he finds time to review for the magazines and to write poetry, under the pseudonym, "Aborigine," for Charles Collins' A Line o' Type or Two column . . . He talked to the Rotarians on "Codes, from Chaldea to Chicago." These were a few of his observations:

"If we don't live what we preach, what we preach won't live." . . . "You cannot maintain wrong relations with your neighbor and right relations with your Maker." . . . "How silly it is to think that thru war we can reach a lasting peace." . . . "Despite its failure to stop wars—a charge frequently leveled against it—Rotary International has kept alive thru two terrible wars, the spirit of men of good will. It has maintained, and still maintains, that this is a life to be lived—not an act to be put on."—Frederick Babcock in "Among the Authors," *Chicago Tribune*.

THE AMERICAN HERITAGE

A most attractive new magazine, the *American Heritage*, that will greatly interest lovers of American history, is being launched by the American Association for State and Local History. It is to be issued quarterly and those interested in the growth of America will be stimulated by this new publication, which promises to be instructive as well as entertaining. Full color pictures, charts and maps are included in its pages, and its articles are most excellently presented. The subscription rate has been placed at three dollars, annually, and it may be obtained through its editor, Earle Newton, *American Heritage*, Montpelier, Vermont.

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