

A July Alarm

The excitement of the trip made by the First Regiment of the Western Division of the Iowa Volunteer Militia into Nodaway County had scarcely subsided when a call for help came from the beleaguered Union men of Gentry and Worth counties which adjoin Nodaway on the east.

On the evening of the eighteenth of July, 1861, a messenger rode into Bedford, Iowa, with a letter which stated that the Secessionists had assembled in considerable force near Fairview in Worth County and were threatening to exterminate the Union men under Colonel Manlove Cranor and then make a raid into Taylor County. Once more the people of Bedford thrilled with excitement and alarm. Messengers were sent throughout the county, notifying the volunteers of the impending danger. On the morning of July 19th Captain Dale and his cavalrymen left Bedford for the seat of trouble, and on the next day about a hundred and fifty men under Lieutenant Colonel L. T. McCoun followed in wagons.

Another messenger from Colonel Cranor carried the story of his predicament to Colonel John Edwards, aide-de-camp to Governor Kirkwood, who with headquarters at his home in Chariton had charge of the defense of the southern border of Iowa from Appanoose to Taylor County. Other messen-

gers carried the call for help to Colonel John Morledge at Clarinda and to Colonel Elias S. Hedges who commanded a partially organized regiment of volunteers in Fremont County. All three of these men began immediate preparations to assist their endangered friends in Missouri. Colonel Morledge set out with about four hundred Page County home guards. Likewise, nearly two hundred Fremont County volunteers started for Missouri close behind the boys from Page County.

As soon as Colonel Edwards learned of the difficulty across the border he dispatched messengers to the various home-guard companies within reach, ordering them to concentrate at Chariton and also at Allendale across the line in Missouri south of Ringgold County. He sent communications to Keokuk and to Burlington requesting that two pieces of artillery be forwarded to him if they could be obtained. Colonel Edwards himself set out for the camp at Allendale which was temporarily under the command of Captain W. C. Drake of Corydon.

Meanwhile Captain Dale and his cavalymen of Bedford had effected a junction with Colonel Cranor and his outnumbered troops. The Secessionists learning of the approach of Iowa men in considerable numbers retreated southward to a place near Gentryville in Gentry County about forty miles south of the State line. Here they took up a strong position and prepared to give battle.

When the Taylor County troops under Colonel

McCoun reached the State line they halted to await word from Captain Dale. On the morning of July 22nd a messenger dashed into camp on horseback with the news that the Secessionists had retreated to Gentryville followed by Colonel Cranor's command and by Captain Dale's cavalry. The volunteers were urged to push on with all possible dispatch. The advance was delayed, however, to await the Page County troops who, it was learned, were fast approaching.

With the arrival of Colonel Morledge and his command the invading force pushed southward into Missouri until nightfall and then encamped. During the night the Fremont County boys caught up and joined the camp, making a total of over seven hundred men. Lack of supplies for a force of this size, a shortage of ammunition, and the receipt of information that Colonel Cranor was being reënforced by units of Union men from near-by counties in Missouri induced Colonel Morledge to send forward only part of his command under Lieutenant Colonel McCoun while he returned to Iowa with the rest. Another day's march brought McCoun within a mile or so of Albany, Missouri, and on the following morning he reached Colonel Cranor's camp.

Here, much to the surprise and disappointment of the Iowa reënforcements, the Union and Secession commanders were found in conference arranging the terms of a settlement whereby an armed clash would be avoided. B. Rector of Sidney, Iowa, was chosen

to draw up the terms of a truce wherein both sides agreed to lay down their arms, to return home, and to assist each other in enforcing the laws of Missouri against all offenders. The Secessionists pledged themselves to abstain from all acts of violence and lawlessness, to take an oath of allegiance to the United States, to march under the Stars and Stripes, and to give three cheers for the Union. Approximately two hundred of the enemy complied with these terms, while the rest melted away unmolested. Patriotic speeches were made by men on both sides and oratory instead of bullets ended the threatened clash.

Word of the treaty of peace reached Colonel Edwards at Allendale, thus making a further advance of his command into Missouri unnecessary. He felt certain, however, that the truce was only a temporization and that sooner or later the issue must be settled by arms. Consequently, he ordered his force to march back to Pleasant Plains near the State line in Decatur County, Iowa, and there to engage in military maneuvers until he was certain that the trouble below the border was ended.

One of the men who marched from Chariton to Allendale and back left this account of the event. "The next day our army was augmented by the arrival of several other companies of Home Guards from other counties, and commanders in gaudy uniforms began to appear and multiply orders. Honest John Edwards of Lucas county, acting under au-

thority from the governor of Iowa, proceeded to take supreme command, and ordered the purchase of beans and tobacco for the army.

“In pursuance of his orders our forces moved the next day to a place called Pleasant Plaines, where it was announced we would practice the art of war and get ready to fight the rebels when we found them. The distance to Pleasant Plaines was about seventeen miles. The weather was exceedingly hot. I was assigned to the rear guard with ten or twelve other boys under the command of a farmer who knew no more than we did about the duties of a soldier.

“In making this march, we had to cross a river, and the main part of the army being nearly one mile in advance, the boys importuned our commander to permit us to go in swimming for just a little while. At first he hesitated, but being a very kind hearted gentleman, he at length consented, and we proceeded to drown our cares in the water. After a short time he suggested that we must move on. Then he urged us to come out. Then an order coming back for him to hurry up, he begged and entreated us to come out. It may not sound military, but the picture of our commander, pacing back and forth on the bank of the river, entreating us to come out, suggested the picture of an old hen pleading with her brood of ducks to swim ashore. At length we did come out, and assuming an unmilitary trot we soon arrived in camp.”

Although the Iowa men from Taylor, Page, and Fremont counties felt that the compromise was a ruse on the part of the Secessionists to await a more favorable time to carry out their intentions, nevertheless there was nothing to do but to return home. They had left store, shop, or harvest field to march over a broken country through timber and undergrowth expecting to engage in a battle to crush Secession, and consequently they were disappointed with the outcome of the campaign.

The homeward march was begun early on July 25th, and when Albany was reached the column halted for refreshments. The Stars and Stripes were raised above the courthouse and to prevent the banner from being torn down, it was nailed to the flagstaff. Speeches urging all Secessionists to return to their allegiance to the United States were made by B. Rector of Sidney and by Captain G. W. Friedley.

The march northward was resumed. In the vicinity of West Point in Gentry County a squad of Page County troops learned of the existence of a Confederate flag at the home of a Missourian in the neighborhood. They rode up to his house and demanded the flag but he denied any knowledge of such a banner. He was told to produce the emblem or to go with them as a prisoner. Thereupon he went into a wheat field near-by and pulled the flag out of a sack carefully hidden in the grain. It was made of excellent material with one white and two red stripes, a blue Union, and twelve white stars. The

flag was five feet wide, fifteen feet long, and on the stars were inscribed the names of the women who made it. This captured trophy was carried home to Clarinda in triumph. The returning troops reached Bedford on July 26th, and were accorded a noisy and hearty welcome. A day later the Page County boys arrived home where they, too, were greeted as conquering heroes.

News of the feverish excitement and widespread alarm in Taylor County caused by the call for help from below the border and by the threat of the Secessionists to invade the county had reached Colonel Grenville M. Dodge commanding the Fourth Iowa Infantry at Camp Kirkwood, Council Bluffs, on the night of July twenty-second. Acting under instructions from Caleb Baldwin, then in charge of military affairs in western Iowa, Dodge with characteristic energy assembled the regiment and gave orders that twenty-five men from each company should be ready to march by four o'clock the next morning. When the commanding officers of the respective companies called for volunteers every man stepped forth and begged to be allowed to go. It thus became necessary for the captains to select from their companies twenty-five men whom they considered best able to stand the campaign. Loud were the protestations of those who had to stay behind.

There was little sleep in Camp Kirkwood that night. Fires were built and the cooks were kept busy preparing rations for the march. Those who

were chosen to go were too excited to sleep and spent the time in getting their equipment ready, while those who had to stay bemoaned their fate. The men were called out at four o'clock and an hour later the column, two hundred and twenty-four strong, moved out of camp and headed southeast. Glenwood, twenty-two miles distant, was reached at noon, and there a halt was made for a three hour rest. The march was resumed in mid-afternoon and six more miles were covered before a halt was made for the night. Twenty-eight miles — good marching for raw troops!

Camp No. 1 was pitched on a slope near Brush Run and the boys were not long in getting supper and turning in for the night. Sympathetic advice was plentiful for those who had to mount guard after the long march, but there was no flinching on the part of those chosen for this disagreeable duty. During the night a messenger brought word of the defeat of the Union army at Manassas, and this disaster strengthened the resolution of the men to stand by the flag until death if necessary.

By sunrise the column was under way again. Camp No. 2 was made near Sidney in Fremont County, twenty-two miles farther south. At this place Captain Samuel Clinton and twenty-four men of the Council Bluffs Artillery Company with two six-pound field pieces caught up and joined Dodge's infantry. All the men of both commands were in good spirits, but hot and dusty and footsore. Col-

Colonel Dodge with the assistance of Judge E. H. Sears procured teams and wagons to transport the men from this point, as many were unable to march.

Camp No. 3 was located near Larke's Creek twenty-five miles east of Sidney. Straggling parties of home-guard troops returning from the scene of trouble in Missouri conveyed the news of the compromise between the Union and Secession forces, near Gentryville, but Colonel Dodge determined to proceed until he heard from his own scout.

When morning came the march eastward was resumed. Shortly after the column started a light rain began to fall and continued steadily until noon. By one o'clock the Nodaway River, half a mile east of Clarinda, was reached, and Camp No. 4 was pitched. A few hours later the scout, Sergeant Frederick Teal, arrived in camp and confirmed the report received from the returning home guards.

He had been in the camp of the Secessionists near Gentryville and found them about six hundred in number entrenched in a strong position, but poorly armed and equipped. He reported that they had disbanded and returned home but that only about a third had ratified the compromise while the rest had scattered, sinking their field pieces in the river and burying their small arms. He found that the Secessionists in northwestern Missouri were fearing an invasion from Iowa fully as much as the people of southwestern Iowa feared an invasion by Missourians. He reported also that in Gentry, Worth, and

Nodaway counties crops were left unharvested and that many farms were deserted by their owners, who had fled to Iowa.

On the evening of July 26th, a prisoner was brought into Dodge's camp by a returning squad of Clarinda home guards. He stated that he knew where the Confederates had buried two pieces of artillery. Thinking it important to secure these weapons Colonel Dodge, early the next morning, sent a detail of ten men to return with the prisoner to the spot where he said the field pieces were buried.

Although the men in Dodge's battalion on the way southward were in good spirits and anxious for a fight they became more and more restless as they neared the border and learned that all chances for a scrap had been spoiled by the compromise. Camp No. 4 was nicknamed Camp Disappointment. Nevertheless, certain incidents in camp had a tendency to keep up the spirits of the battalion. Men took turns in acting as boss cook and on Saturday, July 27th, the cook in charge decided to have boiled beans for supper. From the mess wagon he procured half a bushel of beans and put them on to cook. Coming around later to see how the meal was progressing he looked into the bean pot and noticed the small, white germ sprouts which appear when beans are boiled. Not being familiar with this sight he concluded at once that the sprouts were worms and called the captain of his company to look at the beans. Sure enough the captain saw clearly that the beans were

wormy — alive with them in fact, for hundreds of quivering white particles were floating in the boiling water. Filled with wrath at the fraud perpetrated upon the commissary department, he ordered the mess to be thrown out and out it went. Thenceforth Captain "Beans" and Boss Cook "Beans" were the joke of the camp.

Camp Disappointment was a center of attraction for the people of Clarinda, and hundreds of visitors thronged the camp ground in the evening to see Colonel Dodge put his men through well-performed military maneuvers. The neat rows of white tents on the level pasture land along the Nodaway River, the range of green-clad hills to the eastward, the town of Clarinda on the level prairie to the west, marching soldiers in uniform, and a battery of artillery practicing its evolutions made a picture long remembered by all who saw it.

A minister from Clarinda preached on Sunday to the men in Dodge's command and to a large number of Page County visitors at Camp Disappointment. During Sunday night the stillness of the sleeping camp was shattered by a shot accidentally fired by a guard. At the alarm officers ordered their men out of bed and into line immediately. Everyone thought that the Secessionists had surprised them and that a battle was certain. The noises of the night were magnified and conjured into an overwhelming force of the enemy. Some of the men were scared, they afterwards admitted, others were excited, and a few

were as calm and deliberate as veterans. Some came into line without their arms, others were half-dressed, and one private fell in with nothing on but his cartridge box and a shirt. It was soon discovered, however, that the alarm was false and the men returned to bed.

The detachment sent out to unearth the enemy's ordnance returned on Monday with the report that no Secession artillery could be found. Colonel Dodge thereupon issued an order for the return march to begin on the following morning. Twenty-five miles were covered the first day and Camp No. 5 was pitched at a place called Fisher's Grove. Bad water, heat, and change of diet having made a number of the men sick, Colonel Dodge abandoned the plan of marching to Council Bluffs and procured teams and wagons for the rest of the journey. Camp No. 6 was made at Glenwood on July 31st, and on the following day the men, covered with more dust than glory, reached Camp Kirkwood.

Twice within a month troops from southwestern Iowa had invaded Missouri at the call for help from Union men across the border. Now peace seemed to be established by a truce between Union and Secession forces in the affected area. Would this truce endure? Home-guard troops in the counties along the border of southwestern Iowa doubted it and so continued their Saturday drills to be in readiness should danger threaten again.

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