

Annals of Iowa
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GENERAL LAUMAN.- A RIFT IN THE CLOUD

In the summer of 1863, while Gen. Sherman was investing the City of Jackson, Mississippi, which held the forces of the rebel Gen. Joseph Johnston, one of the federal Division commanders, an Iowa officer, was suddenly suspended from command and ordered to the rear,— to report to General Grant at Vicksburg, was the language of the order. Up to the hour of his suspension he had stood among the foremost from his State in the field, and conspicuous among the officers of his rank in the Western Army. None had a better record for gallant deeds on the many fiercely contested battle-fields of the West. At Belmont, at Donelson, at Shiloh, at the Hatchie, he had won distinction. This officer was Brig. Gen. Jacob G. Lauman. Rumor was at once busy in accounting for this sudden retirement. In army circles, of the army to which he belonged, the subject was freely discussed. That a fearful loss had occurred to his command in an advance movement made by the wing of the army to which he belonged, was not of itself sufficient ground for the censure which his removal implied. It was rumored, in explanation, that he had recklessly pushed his men into a most destructive position in *disobedience* of orders, bringing upon his command needless loss of life. And to these statements of the transaction his hosts of friends throughout the army were obliged to yield assent, for there were the bloody record of the almost annihilated 3d Iowa, and the verdict of General Sherman. Patent and uncontrovertible testimony, with no given exculpatory facts. But, though silenced, there was yet a lingering belief in the judgments of many who knew him best, and who knew most of the circumstances of the fatal movement, that in due time, on investigation, his conduct would be satisfactorily explained, and his well-earned honorable reputation cleared.

But months passed, and Lauman was without a trial and without a command. A year, and yet no investigation. Another year. The war ends. He is mustered out of the service, his repeated petitions for a trial unanswered. And thus he retired to private life. A few weeks ago he died, and thousands of brave men throughout all the West, who had served with or knew him in the field, mourned his death as that of a brave, patriotic, and good man.

There are those who have always believed that Lauman was sacrificed at Jackson by his corps commander, in being made unjustly to assume the responsibility of that disastrous affair. In other words, that he acted under orders throughout; and that misrepresentations as to the responsibility of the movement were made to General Sherman when it was found by the mover to be a disaster.

That he was never court-martialed, notwithstanding his repeated demands for a trial; that the facts were never submitted to a court composed of his comrades in arms, is significant of wrong somewhere.

That Sherman and Grant should not have found time, amid the stirring campaigns which followed each other in such rapid succession, to give a personal hearing to the case, is quite easily explained; but that an investigation was never ordered or allowed by them, indicates the active and persistent hostility of a powerful enemy who had their confidence and their ear. Who that enemy may have been, is indicated in the following communication from Captain W. H. F. Randall, the Adjutant General of General Lauman, whose position gave him the facilities of knowing all the facts; of being cognizant of every order, written and verbal, connected with the

disastrous transaction which beclouded the military career of his commander.

We first heard an account of it about a year and a half after its occurrence, narrated by the Captain to a group of officers, as they drank their coffee and ate "hard tack" around the struggling blaze of a camp fire on a bleak December night; and we also heard then and there utterances of profound indignation by the listening group, as the facts of the movements and orders of the day that wrought the disaster to Lauman were set forth by one who, of a necessity, knew them all, for they had come to his knowledge in the line of official duty, a cognizance of which he could not well evade, and hence could not be mistaken in the statements made, while the high character of the narrator as a soldier and gentleman left no room for question of his correct intention.

At our request, the Captain has written out a statement of the facts, which we place before the readers of THE ANNALS:

SELMA, ALABAMA, APRIL 26TH, 1867.

DR. HUFF-*Dear Sir:* Your letter requesting of me a statement of the movement at Jackson, Mississippi, which resulted in disastrous consequences to the command, and to the fortunes of General Lauman, is received. * '* *

It will be impossible, from where I write, to give more than an outline statement of the matter; for the reason that the official letters and orders which were received by the General, controlling him in that movement, are not in my possession, and I shall be compelled to relate the occurrence from my best recollection, which, however, is perfectly clear as to essential facts.

Permit me to begin by going back of that field a few weeks to relate an incident of camp life, which may, and I think does, have a bearing on events subsequent in explaining the actions of a party concerned.

General Ord had just assumed command of the 13th Army Corps, to which Lauman's Division was attached, and was visiting the command. While seated together in Lauman's tent in conversation, the battle of the "Hatchie" was introduced and discussed. Both these Generals were in that engagement, and General Ord received a wound. When the fight commenced General Hurlbut was in command, and had been in command of the troops to that time; when in the very heat of battle, as I am informed, General Ord reported on the field and took command. Soon afterward the forces were thrown into disorder; Ord was wounded, and was compelled to leave the field. Hurlbut again took command, rallied the forces, and gained the battle. General Lauman, in his conversation referring to this battle, remarked that it was unfortunate that he (Ord) assumed command just at the time he did, not knowing the strength or position of the enemy, the nature of the ground, or the metal of the men, as well as Hurlbut. This of course shocked the sensibility of Ord, and from that time to the time Lauman was relieved, he felt as if it were impossible for him to please his commander. So soon as Vicksburg was taken General Sherman was placed in command of an expeditionary force, to pursue Johnston and his army. General Ord's Corps made up part of this force. Johnston retired behind his works at Jackson, and Sherman invested the city from the river on the one side to the river on the other side of the city. Lauman was ordered to move to the extreme right of the line, and gain a position in continuation of the line of investment, leaving one brigade to guard the corps train. He commenced skirmishing with the enemy so soon as he had fairly moved to the right, and continued advancing and skirmishing, until darkness overtaking him he ordered his men to fall

back along the line of railroad and rest for the night. General Hovey's Division was on the immediate left of Lauman, and, as I have before stated, the latter was on the extreme right of the whole line. During the night orders were received directing a general bombardment to commence the next morning. Lauman was instructed to send out a regiment, during the continuance of the bombardment, to reconnoiter between the right of the command and the Pearl River Bridge, and to watch the effect of the bombardment and the movement of the enemy. He was also instructed to keep one brigade in reserve, and with the remainder of his Division to move forward with the main line, keeping close up with Hovey, and to move forward with him. So strict were the instructions that, I remember well, General Lauman remarked they left him with no discretion, and that they indicated to his mind that there was fear manifested he would not keep up with Hovey. Never before did I know him to be so anxious and determined to obey orders to the letter. Every portion of his command had received their orders and were promptly executing them at the time designated. While the bombardment was progressing, and the line was advancing, General Hovey sent no less than three messengers to Lauman, with request that he keep well up as he was advancing. He assured Hovey that he would keep well up, and he did. The railroad separated Lauman from Hovey. The ground over which Hovey passed was nearly level, or rather a graduated slope. Lauman's ground was very much broken. He drove the enemy across a low flat or bottom, thence up an elevation, which, when he reached the top or plain surface, brought him into full view of the enemy behind their works. Here he doubtless should have checked the advance, and retired behind the elevation to a line in retreat, where he might have taken a strong position and held it, but his orders were of the strictest character; besides he felt that if he retired he would leave Hovey's flank exposed, and leave his regiment liable to be captured, which had started on the reconnaissance. Just in front of his left was a large thicket of undergrowth, where a large number of the enemy lie concealed; just in front of his right was an earthwork holding a full battery, besides the enemy were behind their line of works in full force. Before General Lauman had time to give any orders, if he had wished to do so, a heavy fire was opened upon his command from all these points, simultaneously, and, I may say, unexpectedly, for the skirmishers had been allowed to advance with but little resistance until the main force appeared in full view, when the shot and shell were poured into our ranks so thick as to leave but few to tell the tale to the reserve. Let those blame General Lauman who will, but none can say he exceeded his orders. Had he been left with discretionary power, I doubt if he had advanced his line so rapidly and without greater caution; indeed, he did not know how far he was from the line of works of the enemy when he started in the morning, and he was unable to get information from any one. He told me afterward that General Ord claimed to have given him *verbal* orders not to go nearer to the works than fifteen hundred yards, but he said he had never received such orders. It is night at Dupont, Jefferson county. Here the son made the acquaintance of a merchant who offered him a situation as clerk in his store, which was joyfully accepted, and he at once entered upon his duties, where he remained two years, learning the business so thoroughly, and discharging his duties so intelligently and with so much fidelity, and manifesting so good a business capacity, that he won the confidence not only of his employer, but of the wholesaling dealers in the large cities, where he was frequently sent to transact business, to such an extent that they volunteered to sell him all the goods needed to start business on his own account, notwithstanding he was destitute of a dollar of capital and only a boy. Accordingly, at the age of sixteen, he purchased a four thousand dollar stock of goods and began business in his own name.

At this time he was very small of his age and youthful in looks, not being larger than boys usually are at twelve or thirteen. His diminutive size and youthful appearance attracted frequent

attention, when visiting the cities for the purchase of goods, as contrasting so remarkably with his matured judgment and capacity "as a man of business." However, at the age of eighteen he commenced growing, and very rapidly stretched up to the manly height of nearly six feet.

During the following six years young Bussey pursued the business of merchandising with varied success. One year of the time he returned to a clerkship with his old employer, at Dupont, having previously sold out his business. After a year's interval he entered into company with an older brother and opened anew. This brother was a physician, and, being actively employed in his profession, the management of the mercantile affairs was left entirely to the younger.

During these six years the young man completed his education; or rather laid the foundation for that mental discipline and culture which has developed his fine powers of mind into strength and activity; which has rendered him accomplished in varied fields of learning, and fitted him for the successful discharge of every duty which in public or private life he has been called upon to perform. During all these years he devoted several hours of each day to laborious study. Rising at four in the morning he applied himself until business hours; then, after business hours, until ten at night, was with him an invariable rule. Two years of this time he pursued a course of medical studies, under the instruction of his partner brother, until his health failing he was compelled to give up study for the time and limit his exertions to the single occupation of his merchant business. In the meantime, during these years of labor and study,—the formative stages of his character,—he had united with the Methodist Church, and, in being fixed in his religious principles, was kept aloof from the evil associations which throng the pathway of youth, and especially those who are thrown thus early on the world, on their own resources, and which thousands of the most gifted, and kindly of heart, find beyond their unaided powers of resistance.

In 1855, Mr. Bussey, having married and determined upon a new and wider field of business than his present, turned his attention to looking up some spot for a permanent home, and having been captivated by the descriptions of the bright skies, and the beautiful and vast prairies of Iowa, removed hither in August of that year, as heretofore mentioned; became here, as he had been previously, a successful and prosperous merchant; came through the panic of 1857 with unimpaired credit, and branching out into other channels of investment went on prospering as before. Much of his success is, no doubt, due to a habit of his, of looking thoroughly and minutely into the details of his affairs, and leaving nothing to loss by the carelessness or dishonesty of employees.

Thus the war found him—a successful and thriving merchant. Before entering upon the part he performed in the war of the rebellion, which has brought his name before the country, it is proper to make some mention of his political record.

Up to the time of the inauguration of the rebellion he had been an earnest and efficient democrat. In 1858, he had carried his county in a hotly contested canvass, and been elected a member of the senate over Judge Moon, and served through the session of the succeeding winter. In 1860, he was a delegate to the Charleston Convention, which, reassembling at Baltimore in June, nominated Stephen A. Douglas for President. Returning home he supported the candidate presented by that convention with all the zeal, energy, ability, and influence he possessed, fully impressed with apprehensions that the country was rapidly drifting toward a revolution, which the election of only one of the several candidates—his own—could avert.

The signal gun having been sounded at Sumter, and the issue having been made clear and sharp between the government and its enemies, he took the side of the government. Stepping out of the ranks of his party, no longer a partisan, he became simply a patriot. Like the great

leader whom he had supported through the late canvass; like thousands of other noble spirits of his party all over the country; at this trying time, he recognized no longer a party whose single interests were to be served; but a country to be defended and saved. At a war meeting, called by the citizens of Davis county, he came boldly forward to the support of the government, and, in a speech of great eloquence and power, publicly recognized the claims of the government to be paramount to those of any party, and pledged himself to so vote and act in the General Assembly, if it should be convened in extra session,—a pledge which he fully redeemed when the extra session was called.

To any one of the next generation who may incidentally fall upon this number of THE ANNALS,—if it should so happen,—the foregoing few sentences will no doubt sound strangely. That a writer of this day, in representing the character and actions of a public man from the true and loyal State of Iowa, should deem it necessary in defining his political position at the opening of the great contest in which the integrity of the Union, and even life of the government, was involved, to mention that his subject joined the friends of the government in measures for its defense against his enemies, will be regarded, no doubt, as at least a supererogate explanation. For it is not probable that the next or any future generation of Iowans will properly appreciate the true status of parties, or the exact temper of the people of those times, which to be appreciated needs to have been felt. That there could at such a time have remained in life any considerable force of a grand old party organization, which had been potent in influence, and had become venerable as one of the ancient pillars of the republic, to now stand passive through the fearful crisis, with the calm, deliberate, unfeeling expression, as their motto: "It is an abolition war; let them fight it out; Democrats have nothing to do with it" will not be readily comprehended. Nor was a "masterly inactivity" in behalf of the country always the state of these partisans: at times, and at certain points, a bitter feeling was developed which led to acts of opposition. Davis county was one of those points, and Senator Bussey, on his return from the extra session of the Legislature, where he had distinguished himself by his bold and unequivocal position in favor of his country, and as a member of the Military Committee of the Senate, labored to place the state in a position to perform her share of the work of suppressing the rebellion, was advised by his party, that he had "misrepresented his constituents," given "aid and comfort to an abolition war, and was no longer worthy of fellowship as a democrat," and was thus formally read out of the party for no crime but loyalty to the country.

Governor Kirkwood, who was laboring untiringly to place the state on an ample war-footing, and who was watching carefully the actions of the leading citizens for the purpose of selecting efficient co-workers for responsible positions, had not failed to notice the intelligence and energy with which this young Senator had demeaned himself throughout since the opening of the war, sent him a commission as aid-de-camp with rank of Lt. Colonel, and assigned him to the control of the militia of the south-east part of the state.

At this time, the rebels in north-east Missouri were actively engaged in hostilities against the government, and maintained a menacing attitude toward the frontiers of Iowa, for purposes of plunder. Colonel Bussey immediately occupied himself in arming the militia of his district and preparing them for defense of the border. A collision of these two irregular forces finally occurred at Athens, where fifteen hundred rebels, under command of General Martin Green, attacked about four hundred militia, under command of Col. David Moon, and were repulsed.

About this time Col. Bussey was authorized by the U. S. Government to raise a regiment of cavalry, which he set about doing at once with his usual energy and success; and by the 20th of August had his regiment, the 3d Iowa Cavalry, in rendezvous, having been commissioned its

Colonel on the 10th of the same month.

Early in February, 1862, he was ordered from Benton Barracks, St. Louis, Mo., to Rolla; a few days afterward to Springfield to join General Curtis; arriving at Springfield, found Curtis already in pursuit of Price toward the Arkansas border. Stimulated by the rumors of an approaching battle, he pushed forward and overtook Curtis at Sugar Grove, having marched two hundred miles in four days. Here he at once became incorporated into the Army of the South-West, and was assigned the command of a brigade of cavalry.

Colonel Bussey's first battle was that fierce and famous encounter at Pea Ridge, where he commanded his brigade and did efficient service, establishing his reputation at once as a brave and discreet officer, and secured the confidence of the troops under his command and also of his commanding General.

Throughout the several encounters of this hotly contested and protracted battle the 3d Iowa behaved gallantly. Like their Colonel, it was their first time under fire, and probably the hardest fought battle that the regiment ever witnessed, but they came through nobly. A portion of General Bussey's command, the Benton and Fremont Hussars, -however, are said to have acted badly in this battle. On two occasions, in fighting which occurred in the vicinity of Leetown, during some of the counter movements of General Curtis to resist a flank attack of Van Dorn, they broke and fled without firing a gun. The disastrous result of their cowardice, however, was prevented by the steadiness and courage of the gallant 3d Iowa and the balance of the brigade, under the immediate direction of their intrepid leader. After the defeat of the enemy, Col. Bussey's command was among the pursuing forces that followed them to their strongholds among the Boston Mountains.

It was at Pea Ridge that civilization was outraged by the shocking barbarities perpetrated by the savage hordes, led to the field by Albert Pike. Among the victims of these barbarians were eight of the 3d Iowa, found scalped, and many others bearing the evidence of having been murdered after their capture.

Continuing with the Army of the Southwest during the spring and summer of 1862, participating in the long and tedious march through Arkansas, he was frequently sent out on separate expeditions from the main army with his brigade, but without finding any considerable force of the enemy, had no opportunity of signaling the campaign with any farther battles. On the 10th of July, 1862, he was assigned the command of the 3d brigade of General Steele's division of the same army. On the 11th of January, 1863, was appointed to the command of the District of Eastern Arkansas, which he filled until the following April, when he succeeded Major General Washburn in command of the 2d Cavalry Division, "Army of the Tennessee." At his own suggestion was relieved and ordered to report to Vicksburg, then the most active field of military operations in the west. Soon after his arrival was appointed Chief of Cavalry, and, until the fall of Vicksburg, commanded all the cavalry engaged in the operations connected with that famous siege; especially rendering important service to General Grant in watching the movements of the rebel General Joe Johnston, who was hovering near with a large force waiting an opportunity to raise the siege. He led the advance in Sherman's movement against Johnston at Jackson, Miss., after the fall of Vicksburg; meeting the rebel General Jackson on the 8th of July and forcing him to retire. During the few days' siege of Jackson, he was active in visiting different points, Calhoun, Beattie's Bluff, Vernon and other places, driving in the outposts of the enemy and feeling his strength. Met Jackson again at Canton on the 17th of July, and, after a battle that lasted all day, from 8 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock in the evening, drove him to the east side of Pearl river.

January 5th, 1864, he was commissioned Brigadier General U. S. V., for "special gallantry," on reports of commanding officers. It was, probably, a misfortune to General Bussey, that, at the time of this promotion, he was serving in the trans-Mississippi Army: for the reason that an order of the War Department assigned all officers promoted to Brigadier General to duty with the corps in which they were serving at the time of promotion. Under this rule, General Bussey was still left with the 7th Army Corps in Arkansas, where but few military movements of any magnitude affording opportunity for distinction took place from that time on to the end of the war.

His promotion found him at Little Rock, where he remained until the winter of 1865. When General Reynolds took command of the Department,—relieving General Steele,— General Bussey was assigned to a new and very important command in the re-organization which took place. At this time in the Department of Arkansas there was three divisions of federal troops belonging to the 7th Army Corps, and at the same time twelve Brigadier Generals in the Department, all but two of whom ranked General Bussey. Under this state of facts he could only expect to be assigned to the command of a brigade at best. What, then, was his surprise on receiving an order assigning him to a command, embracing Western Arkansas and the Indian Territory, and the 3d Division of the 7th Army Corps, numbering about ten thousand men, stationed at the military posts of Fort Smith, Fort Gibson, Van Buren, and Fayetteville; and this over the heads of ten Generals, his seniors in rank. This appointment was peculiarly complimentary, when the circumstances and the particular reasons for it are considered.

Grave charges of corruption had been made against all the officers who had served in that District. The War Department had sent several inspectors to examine the charges. One of them, Maj. Gen. Herron, recommended the removal of all the important officers of the District, which was done, and General Bussey was selected with the view of breaking up the corruption and restoring discipline,—a compliment both to his integrity as a man and capacity as an officer. To understand the exact character of the work which he had to perform, it may be proper to give a brief outline sketch of the "situation" of his district at the time of his assuming command. An officer, who was stationed within the District prior to that occurrence and who remained there during Gen. Bussey's administration, sends us an account from which we gather the following condition of its affairs:

Fort Smith, the Headquarters of the District, had from its first re-occupation been the resort of a crowd of speculators, traders and contractors; many of them unscrupulous to the last degree. These men, by corrupting some officers and overawing others by their influence, had committed a series of enormous abuses, which ended in great demoralization to the troops and loss to the Government. Illicit and contraband trade in violation of the treasury regulations was openly carried on; Government transportation was used in the carrying of traders' and sutlers' goods, while the troops were destitute of clothing and food; private property was taken from the people and sold to the Government by the parties taking it, and the proceeds appropriated to their own uses; beef, which cost the contractors nothing, being taken without pay and drives in by the soldiers, was sold to the government at high prices; hay, which was cut by the soldiers on the prairies, was sold by the contractors to the government for thirty dollars per ton; scouts, sutlers, cotton speculators, robbed and plundered the people; houses were burned, fencing destroyed, and the country generally laid waste. The discipline of the troops had become greatly relaxed; drunkenness, theft and pillaging prevailed to an alarming extent; and to add to the disorder, through the neglect of the proper officers, food, clothing and equipments were not forwarded, and the stores that were on hand suffered to spoil. The people plundered alike by friend and foe,

were utterly disheartened; and, abandoning all attempts at cultivation of the ground or self support in any way, resorted in crowds to the Commissary Department for subsistence. 300,000 rations were issued per month to white refugees alone. The troops, badly fed, badly clothed, badly equipped, were discontented and disorderly.

General Bussey, upon his arrival, entered immediately upon his duties with an intelligence of business, a promptness of decision, an efficiency of action, and an integrity of conduct, that bore speedy and beneficent results. A few weeks changed the whole aspect of affairs and made his District and Division one of the most orderly and best disciplined in the Department. The hordes of contractors and spoilsmen were sternly and quickly dispersed; incompetent and immoral officers summarily dismissed; ample supplies were brought forward, and the troops, fed, clothed, and equipped, for the first time, acquiesced cheerfully in the regulations which were established, and rigid discipline was restored. The whisky shops were closed; the people were encouraged to rebuild their fences and cultivate their fields, and were protected from depredation, thereby helping to lessen the immense expense of the government in their support.

To remedy all these evils and reorganize his command, required the most arduous and laborious, personal direction of the commander. The work was herculean. To every branch of business, and every class of complaints, or abuses, he gave careful personal attention. Every paper requiring his endorsement was carefully inquired into, and every transaction, involving the interests of the District or Government, was given a personal cognizance. All persons had free access to him, and his affability of manners, his kindness, firmness and rectitude of character, impressing itself upon all who came in contact with him, created a marked influence over citizens and soldiers, and secured him the confidence and good will of all.

General Bussey was commissioned Major General by brevet March 13th, 1865; remaining in command of his District until the 1st of October of the same year, when the war having ended he was mustered out of service.

General Bussey is now a resident of New Orleans. Finding himself enfeebled in health on his return from service which seemed to be aggravated by a return to a northern climate, he was induced, after a few months' trial at his Iowa home, to return and take up his abode under the more genial skies of the "Sunny South," where, recovering in a measure, he has entered into an extensive, and, as usual with him, prosperous business.