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WOODRUFF, CHARLES ALBERT

THE WORK OF THE CALIFORNIA VOLUNTEERS

AS SEEN BY AN EASTERN VOLUNTEER.

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AN ADDRESS, BY

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MAJ. C. A. WOODRUFF, U.S.A.

∴ BEFORE THE ∴

California Volunteers Society of
Society of California Volunteers

OCTOBER 25th, 1893.

THE WORK OF THE CALIFORNIA VOLUNTEERS.

AN ADDRESS,

—BY—

MAJOR CHAS. A. WOODRUFF, U. S. A.

Mr. President and Members of the Society of California Volunteers:

COMRADES :

It is with feelings of pride and pleasure that I embrace this opportunity of thanking you for the compliment of election to honorary membership in your society.

I believe that I can best show my appreciation of this honor by giving a few official facts and statistics indicative of what California Volunteers did, that make it an honor for any man to be associated with you ; by telling what every one, conversant with the history which you and your comrades made, thinks of the service you rendered to the United States Government in its grand struggle for existence. I shall only present the general features of your record, leaving to others the congenial task of giving in detail the work, the heroism, the suffering, and the beneficial results that followed the tiresome but victorious expedition that was generally made by detachments, companies, or at most, battalions.

I may not tell you anything that *you* do not already know, but it is a lamentable truth that many of your fellow citizens, many old soldiers, are not conversant with the history you and your comrades made, do not properly appreciate your services, and do not know what was expected of you, or how you performed your task.

Words of mine can add no color to the picture carried in your recollections of the bitter feelings that existed all over California just before and after the firing on Fort Sumter. You remember well how each man's hand was armed against his neighbor—how secession was weaving its web around you—how, to the Unionist, all was dark and gloomy, until, on the morning of April 25th, Order No. 5, by General E. V. SUMNER, was flashed over the state, carrying hope and comfort to every man who was loyal to the Union.

My labor of love is to tell what happened after that; how your strong hearts and willing hands destroyed secession's web, and drove the weavers into their holes, to Alcatraz, or to Texas.

In January, 1861, Fernando Wood recommended that New York city secede, and said: "California and her sisters of the Pacific will no doubt set up an independent republic, and husband their own rich mineral resources."

He could not appreciate the spirit that animated loyal men; California did not *set up* an independent republic, but she helped *keep up* a republic, and kept it up so high that treason could not prevail against it, but it was the same good old republic that our forefathers founded.

California and her sisters of the Pacific did so husband their rich mineral resources, not for themselves, but for the national government that had won them in the glorious campaigns of the Mexican War, as to pour into our treasury during the War, \$325,455,375. Five-sixths of which was gold, and served to keep our financial credit good, and while Confederate bonds sold by the pound, ours had a monetary value in every financial market of the world.

This alone would entitle you to the gratitude of our nation, for without the immense treasure you saved for us, we might, perhaps, have spent our blood in vain; but you did more than this.

The loyal men of California organized, in the face of a secession sentiment that represented the most progressive and bitter "fire-eating" element, and under such leaders as Wright, Carleton, and Connor, (and assisted by seventeen companies from Oregon, nine from Nevada, and two from Washington), crushed

open disloyalty in California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, and Arizona, and made these states and territories stand up squarely for the Union; subdued the hostile Indians, incited as they were by our enemies, over an extent of territory larger than France, Germany, and Austria, combined; maintained communication with the east by two overland routes; soothed the rebellious Mormons, who could put 5,000 well drilled, religious fanatics in the field, with the stern hand of military coercion; and after that historic march (called by the editors of the *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* "a remarkable march"), of nine hundred miles across the drifting, burning sands of Southern California and Arizona, in the face of rebels and hostile Indians, part of the time on half rations of the poorest quality, with water at intervals of from twenty to ninety miles, and that in such limited quantities that often only small detachments could be supplied at a time, the Rio Grande was reached, and the rebels, whose real object was the invasion of California, already defeated by Canby, were driven in confusion from New Mexico, and the Confederate dream of securing the gold of California, with an immense seaboard on the Pacific, and recognition by the European powers, which was sure to follow, was dispelled by a rude awakening to the fact that the Pacific Coast was solid for the Union.

Of this march, General Carleton, whose twenty-two years of service in the regular army, on the frontier and in Mexico, enabled him to speak intelligently, officially reported: "The march of the column from California across the great desert in the summer months, in the dryest season that has been known for thirty years, is a military achievement creditable to the soldiers of the American army. But it would not be just to attribute the success of this march to any ability on my part. That success was gained only by the high physical and moral energies of that peculiar class of officers and men who composed the column from California. With any other troops I am sure I should have failed."

As another result of California's uprising for the Union, if Great Britain, with her usual taking way when she sees an unprotected territorial orphan, had any designs upon our part of the Pacific Coast, as many thought, she wisely kept them to herself.

California's three loyal war Governors, Downey, Stanford and Low, deserve great praise for their stout defense of the Union, and it was particularly fortunate that the military affairs in this far off theatre of war were in the hands of such thorough soldiers as Generals Wright, Carleton, and Connor—each of them veterans of the Mexican War, each a veteran of one or more Indian Wars, each of them disciplined in the regular Army, all of them thoroughly loyal to the government, cool, calm, quick to act, ready to accept any responsibility, and scornful of subtle political theories invented to harass the government. I am proud to add my humble tribute of respect to their heroic memories.

California Volunteers did some of the hardest marching of the war, and much of it under the most disagreeable circumstances. If any one questions this statement, let him remember that these troops endured sufferings incident to deep snows and intense cold, as well as burning sands and torrid heat, and ranged over an extent of territory destitute of railroads, destitute of supplies, much of it arid, barren, and unoccupied, except by Indians, one-third greater than that of the eleven states in rebellion; they garrisoned one hundred and sixty-two stations and cantonments in California, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Washington, Colorado, and Kansas; they constructed eleven, and assisted in building three other permanent posts, some of which are occupied to-day.

They had seventy-seven killed by Indians; thirty-five were drowned in the treacherous, but widely separated streams they crossed; this of itself shows the kind of work they were doing; twenty-one were murdered; five hundred and one were killed or died, exclusive of the loss in the eight companies of Californians in the 1st Washington Territory Volunteers, the "California Hundred," and "Battalion."

Recently I heard a man who served a portion of the war in a crack New York Regiment of Cavalry, and was discharged for disability, speak disparagingly of California Volunteers and their services. I looked up the records a little, and found that in *one* victorious battle, four companies of the 2d California Cavalry each lost an average of twenty per centum more men killed and died of wounds, than did this man's company during the entire war.

(That is, these four companies, in this *one* fight, had *five times* as many killed and mortally wounded, as were killed and mortally wounded in this New York company during the war.) Our comrades of the "California Hundred and Battalion" formed a creditable portion of a fine Regiment, that did excellent service. We all glory in what they did, and they are justly proud of their record, of the blows they gave and received; still these four companies, 2d California Cavalry, in this *one* fight, lost more than half as many killed and died of wounds, as did the five companies composing the "Hundred and Battalion" during the war; and "K" of the 2d California Cavalry, in that same fight, lost as many killed and mortally wounded, as either "F" or "M," and more than "L" of the Battalion, during their entire service.*

Here is what the Government thought of this battle :

"HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY, }
WASHINGTON, D. C., March 29, 1863. }

Brigadier General GEORGE WRIGHT,
Commanding Department of the Pacific,
San Francisco, California.

GENERAL :

I have this day received your letter of February 20th, inclosing P. Ed. Connor's report of his severe battle and splendid victory on Bear River. After a forced march of one hundred and twenty miles in mid-winter, and through deep snows, in which seventy-six of his men were disabled by frozen feet, he and his gallant band of only two hundred attacked three hundred warriors in their stronghold, and after a hard fought battle of over four hours, destroyed the entire band, leaving two hundred and twenty-four dead upon the field. Our losses in the battle were eighteen killed and forty-nine wounded. Colonel Connor and the brave Californians deserve the highest praise for their gallant and heroic conduct.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. W. HALLECK,
General-in-Chief."

* "A," 2d Mass. Cav.,	"Cal. 100,"	11	"A," 2d Cal. Cav.,	3
"B," " "	"Cal. Batt.,"	8	"H," " "	5
"E," " "	" "	7	"K," " "	7
"L," " "	" "	6	"M," " "	5
"M," " "	" "	7		20
		39	"G," 8th N. Y. Cav.,	4

(Colonel Connor was, on the date of this letter, promoted Brigadier-General.)

The average number of men killed by each regiment in the east was only forty-eight, yet five regiments of California Volunteers, alone, killed over twelve hundred, not including the fight against the Kiowas and Comanches, where, under Kit Carson, the troops administered severe punishment, or that at Tongue River, where Connor's command killed sixty-three, in each of which battles other troops participated, but parts of one or more of these five regiments bore a conspicuous part. Three of the remaining five regiments, and the Battalion of Mountaineers, had numerous engagements, and more than maintained the general average.

Your campaigns in work, exposure, hardship, and unceasing vigilance, were at least equal to those of the severest cavalry raids of civilized warfare; in them little honor or glory could be reaped, and they were against a savage foe, from whom defeat meant destruction. And let me add (what only those who have experienced both can realize), with a civilized foe, when off duty inside the lines, the soldier can enjoy himself around the camp-fire, and lie down and sleep as securely as though no enemy were within a thousand miles of him; but when campaigning against Indians, there is constant danger; every rock or bunch of sage brush may conceal a patient, bloodthirsty enemy, and eternal watchfulness is the only price for comparative safety.

Can any man believe that California Volunteers did little work for the Union, when he knows they had such a record?

It was your misfortune to be deprived of the honor of participating in those historic battles of the east upon which the eyes of the world were fixed, though the records show that many of you tried hard enough to get there in body (at your own expense), as you were all there in spirit; and five regiments were raised with the express intention of invading Texas.

This telegram tells the sentiment that animated you in patriotic words that need no explanation, except that they represented the feelings that controlled most of California's 17,000 Volunteers. (California is credited with 15,725 men; add eight companies 1st Washington, and five companies 2d Massachusetts, 1,300; total, 17,025.)

"RUBY VALLEY, Nevada Territory,
September 24, 1862.

Major-General HALLECK,
Washington, D. C.

The 3d Infantry, California Volunteers, has been in service one year, and marched six hundred miles ; it is well officered and thoroughly drilled ; it is of no service on the overland mail route, as there is Cavalry sufficient for its protection in Utah district. The regiment will authorize the Paymaster to withhold \$30,000 of pay now due, if the government will order it east ; and it pledges General Halleck never to disgrace the flag, himself, or California. The men enlisted to fight traitors, and can do so more effectually than raw recruits, and ask that they may at least be placed on the same footing in regard to transportation east.

If the above sum is insufficient, we will pay our own passage from San Francisco to Panama.

By order of the Regiment,

P. EDW. CONNOR,

Colonel Commanding."

But it is the soldier's duty to obey ; you were needed here ; here you were ordered to remain ; here you remained and did your duty, and did it well.

It may be some solace for you to realize that three hundred regiments that served in the east, and yet through no fault of their own, never lost a man in battle, and never killed a rebel.

You showed as patriotic a spirit as the loyal sons of any other section. As a rule, you were earning more than men in other localities before you entered the service, yet while in the Army, practically, so far as its purchasing power was concerned, your pay was only one-half that received by your comrades in the east ; and California has constantly refused to make good the difference in value between the "greenbacks" paid to her Volunteers, and the gold her civilians always demanded in payment from them. In other words, the government paid you 100 cents on the dollar, and you paid the "money changers" from 200 to 250 cents on the dollar.

You turned your back upon home and friends ; you did as hard campaigning, as trying, wearing work, as the best of our

troops ; and the immortal Lincoln considered your services as important and as valuable as were those of any other volunteers during the war.

Comrades, I have only outlined a few historic facts relating to your services during the rebellion, and desire to invite your attention to a few other facts that show how you have suffered, and are still suffering that history to perish by your indifference or political cowardice.

I examined your "State Series" of Histories and Readers, and found no extract from Starr King's burning words of patriotism ; nothing concerning Baker's matchless oratory, of which it was said, "it would make a coward fight ;" nothing to show that Broderick was murdered by the devotees of slavery, simply for raising his eloquent voice against its extension.

It struck me that these books were designed on the "God-alone-knows-who-was-right" idea, and the original plan was never deviated from.

Just think of it—in the particular part devoted to California, *one-third of a page*, as meaningless as a party platform, is entitled "The War Period," while a like amount is devoted to the "Bear Flag Affair ;" one-half a page describes "Miner's Justice," or Lynch Law, and two-thirds of a page treats of the "Vigilance Committee."

Not a word in honor of California's expenditure of moral, mental, and physical strength in the war ; not a word of praise or gratitude even for those who preserved this great commonwealth, thus giving these compilers a state for which to prepare a "series" of milk-and-water books, so completely sterilized by politics as to contain no microbe of national patriotism nor state pride ; not one word that tells your children what you and your comrades did and suffered in order that California should remain a part of this great government of ours ; not a word concerning the part you bore in the great struggle for national existence, that could stimulate in the hearts of your children, pride, or interest even, in the deeds of their fathers.

There is another matter, not strictly relating to the California Volunteers, yet so intimately connected with the war, so creditable to California, and so absolutely ignored by these "non-partisan"

school books, that I desire to speak of it. It is California's relation to the U. S. Sanitary Commission. Up to 1864 the Pacific states had contributed two-thirds of all that was given to sustain this grand institution, that was conceived in the minds of patriotic humanitarians.

Cash contributions were received from all over the world, and yet California alone contributed twenty-five per cent. of the grand total.

In its official report, published in 1866, the Commission states: "We do not hesitate to say that the cash resources of the Commission, which alone commanded and utilized its supplies, were mainly due to the largeness, the constancy, the persistency of the contributions from California and the Pacific Coast, so that to California more than to any state in the Union, is due the growth, usefulness, success, and national reputation of the United States Sanitary Commission.

It was unprecedented and unlooked for. The eldest of the states and territories that thus lavished their bounty on the Commission, as the National Army Relief Agent, had existed as a civilized community hardly seventeen years. The Army they so generously aided and relieved was fighting thousands of miles from their frontier. Between them and its battle-fields were mountain ranges and desert tracts, barriers practically more formidable than the ocean that divides the old world from the new. But the people of the Pacific Coast were impelled in God's good Providence to help the National army, through the Sanitary Commission, and their work will hold high place in history. They so upheld and strengthened this novel and untried popular agency, that it became generally recognized as the chosen almoner of the whole people. The great "Sanitary Fairs" of 1864, which brought millions into its treasury, and into the treasuries of its branches, and which sustained it to the end of the war, would never have been organized had not the bounty of the Pacific States enabled the Commission to prove itself a national organization working on a national scale."

You have a powerful organization of young men whose claim to fame and office is, that their mothers were brought to bed in California; their most fervid orators speak proudly of ancestors

who came merely to seek for gold, of their sufferings in coming and remaining, of how they prospered, because they couldn't help it, but not one word of praise for those who gave up everything to defend California when she was assailed by foes within and foes without.

In the Eastern states the people tenderly cherish and glory in the colors that their sons bore to victory. Every child in Vermont knows and is proud of the fact, that every flag that left the state now graces the walls of her capital. Where are yours? A member of this society gathered a few of them in a case at Sacramento; the whereabouts of the others is unknown, and they are uncared for, save by some of those who marched beneath them. Your historians do not mention them.

In his report of the march of the column, General Carleton says: "I send you a set of colors which have been borne by this column. They were hoisted by Colonel West on Forts Breckenridge and Buchanan; and over Tucson, Arizona, by Colonel Eyre, over Forts Thorn, Fillmore, and over Mesilla, New Mexico, and over Fort Bliss, Texas; they were hoisted by Captain Cremo-ny over Fort Quitman, and by Captain Shirland over Fort Davis, in Texas, and thus again have those places been consecrated to our beloved country."

This glorious extract finds no place in your school books, and to-day the resting place of these historic colors is shrouded in as deep gloom as that which conceals the grave of Moses.

As Americans, we question the sincerity of none, and glory in the valor of *all*, but national patriotism should compel all good citizens to teach that there was a *right* and a *wrong* side to the rebellion; that *moral right*, not *brutal might* triumphed, and they should honor the *right* and glory in it, and commend those who upheld it. And state pride should induce this society and the **Commandery of California, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States**, to take practical steps to teach the world what it does not know or realize—how much the United States is **indebted** for its preservation to the patriotism, valor, and devotion of the **CALIFORNIA VOLUNTEERS**.