

General Grant Took Advice
War Incident That Took Place In This County
July 21, 1897

Two Recruits Get into Trouble—Saved By Chaplain

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Editors of Shelbina Democrat

Yesterday I happened to notice in an old number of "The Youth's Companion" this little incident that occurred during the late war. I remember the circumstances very distinctly. The farmer referred to was Lewis Maddox, who at that time was my next neighbor. The two soldiers came walking and had Mr. Maddox furnish them with a horse apiece, and Lewis rode one, making three in all. The men told him he must go to camp with them, and his neighbor, George Parker, would also be taken in. Grant was then at Salt River bridge on the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad.

They called for something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, Mrs. Maddox sent one of her boys over to my house to let me know, and I laid out in the cornfield half a day, because I did not think I should enjoy the anticipated picnic. But they did not come for me. They took Lewis to camp as stated.

After "the two young soldiers" were disposed of, Grant asked Mr. Maddox if he would take the oath to support the Constitution of the United States. He replied that he had no objections whatever to that oath, took it, and came home.

George Parker

Following is the article:

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* recently printed some reminiscences of General Grant, written by Rev. J. L. Crane, who was chaplain of General—then Colonel Grant's regiment early in the Civil War. One of the antidotes related by Mr. Crane brought out a noble quality of the great commander and ability to change his mind under advice. The incident occurred in Missouri. Two young soldiers, eager to show their zeal, started out on their own account to "put down the rebellion."

They left camp in the afternoon, stayed out all night, and came back the next day with flying colors, bringing a Confederate and two of his horses. Grant was seated by the door of his tent when the two heroes brought the trophies of their victory before him. He did not rise from his seat nor pull his pipe from his mouth, but quietly asked.

"Who gave you permission to be absent from camp?"

"Nobody, we just thought we'd go out and look after some seceshers, and we found this feller and brought him up," and they pointed triumphantly to the prisoner, who was still sitting on his horse and looked as if he expected to be shot before he could say his prayers.

"I'll attend to your case first," said the colonel, and the flush of victory began to fade from their faces as he continued.

"Captain, you will take these boys and have them tied to a tree for six hours for leaving camp without permission."

The boys looked crestfallen and disappeared in company with the captain. After the colonel had questioned the trembling farmer, and found his professions of attachment to the Union satisfactory, he set him at liberty, resumed his smoking, and in half a minute looked as though nothing unusual had happened. The turning to me, with apparently no aim in his remark, he inquired:

"Chaplain, what do you think of camp life by this time?"

"It is entirely a new phase of life to me, colonel, and I have hardly been able to come to a

definite conclusion yet.”

“What do you think of the conduct of those two young men?” he asked as coolly as if he were inquiring about the weather.

“I think they were not intentionally guilty of a violation of discipline; the method was irregular, but they doubtless thought they were doing a good thing for the country.”

“Do you think I punished them too severely?”

“Well, colonel, I do not know that I am prepared to judge of what is too severe in military life.”

“I don't ask you for a military opinion. I ask for your opinion as a citizen. Chaplains are not supposed to be military men. They are suppose to carry into camp the same feeling and views of justice and right that they had in civil life.” And he raised his eyes as if to see whether I appreciated the remarks.

“As you have asked me for a candid opinion, I will give it. I think the punishment was not proportioned to the offense. If it were I, six hours tied up to a tree would be a serious business. I think it was rather too severe on the boys, colonel.”

“But, chaplain, suppose we were surrounded by an enemy, and the men were allowed to stray from camp, they would be taken prisoners or lose their lives in such a case.”

“That appears reasonable, colonel, but we are not near an enemy; besides, the boys are in a new position, and know not exactly what is expected of them, and no idea what they were bringing on themselves.”

“But we should so prepare when the enemy is at a distance that we may be ready when he is near at hand.”

“That is true, sir; yet I still think a milder punishment for unwitting offenders would as effectually work the same results.”

The colonel stroked his beard with his left hand to which he was accustomed when there was the slightest interruption to the current of his thoughts, and puffed his smoke with renewed vigor. Then, in a moment, he called out:

“Orderly, go and tell the guard to release those boys; they have been punished long enough.”