

# The Delta.

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**L. W. RANSOM, Editor.**

Mr. L. P. Fisher, Tos. Bovos and Wm. H. Tonet, are our authorized Agents in San Francisco to receive Advertisements, and receipt for the same.

**FOR PRESIDENT,  
ABRAHAM  
LINCOLN,  
OF ILLINOIS,**

**FOR VICE PRESIDENT,  
ANDREW JOHNSON,  
OF TENNESSEE.**

## REPORT FROM FORT TEJON.

**Indian Affairs Improved--  
Garrison Matter bad as can  
be--Officers of Garrison-  
Soldiers made to do drudgery--  
Oppressive Fatigue Duty--  
Short Allowance, Severe  
Punishment--Full Rations and  
Forage Charged in Account,  
but not Received--Vexatious  
and Insulting Espionage  
practiced upon the Soldiers &  
c., &c.,**

**VISALIA,**

THURSDAY, . . . . MAY 26, 1864

FORT TEJON.—We call special attention to the report from the above post in this issue. "Oh man, man, dressed in a little brief authority plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven as makes the angels weep." It is hard to conceive of any phase of humanity showing it in a worse light, to all correctly thinking people than where a man wantonly tramples on the rights of his fellow men because *circumstances* and not *merit*—for meritorious men do not abuse powers entrusted to them—have placed him over the. Many,

and we believe a large majority of the citizen soldiers serving their country here in California, like our correspondent, are men of intelligence, men of keen sensibilities, who when they enrolled their names held, as it were, their warm pulsating hearts, for Union and Liberty in the same band that subscribed the name, and now, to be spat upon, made scullions of; mere "hewers of wood and drawers of water," to gratify the whim, caprice or malice of men every way their inferiors, except in military grade and the social position growing out of it, is a *leetle* more than the most amiable can bear. Why, the veriest worm will turn and sting, if possible, the foot set too heavily upon it, and shall not these noble men be allowed to go before their peers, the people, through the columns of the press, because forsooth some doughty captain or bold lieutenant with the gilt trappings may happen to look frowningly? When we deny them this poor privilege, so far as in us lies, with tongue and pen, may the one cleave to the roof of the mouth and the arm that wields the other wither to the shoulder socket. We give this report to the world as OUR OWN, we give it for truth, and it must and shall stand as such until the contrary is shown, and to do this our columns are open and quite at the service of any who feel themselves aggrieved. We disclaim any *personal* feeling in the matter, never having seen but one individual of accused or accusers. We seek but justice.

We cannot resist the impulse in this connection to say that the relations subsisting between officers and men in Camp Babbitt (in this place) contrast most admirably with the reported condition of things at Tejon. We have had some little experience in military life and we have never seen a camp better conditioned, or where a more thorough discipline prevails than at Camp Babbitt, and yet the men are kindly treated and cared for, all reasonable wants cheerfully gratified, and as a logical sequence the best possible feeling exist between them. In this we "speak from the card," as we have taken particular care to inform

ourselves upon the point. There comes a day of fierce reckoning for those men who so disregard the rights of others, and we charge them beware.

FORT TEJON, May 16th, 1864.  
*Editor Delta:—*

Yours of May 12th was duly received. In reply I will briefly state, 1st, That I do not know who sent you the anonymous letter you spoke of. 2d, That Indian affairs have much improved within the last week or two; two loads of rice having arrived for them, and they are also now occasionally furnished with a little beef. Many who have been absent among the hills for the past three months are now returning to camp.

As regards the garrison here, I cannot do otherwise than state that matters are about as bad as they well can be, though I must positively deny that it is in a state of mutiny; as this is certainly not the case. Most of the soldiers here have at present only three or four months to serve, and they have determined to bear every imposition, rather than run the risk of forfeiting their hard-earned pay and bounty or leaving the service with apparent dishonor.

The present officers of this battalion always have been bad enough, God knows, but for the last month or two they have been worse than ever before. I cannot account for this state of things otherwise than that they are endeavoring to get revenge upon the men for their refusal to re-enlist, which they did to a man, simply because they did not like their officers, and could not by re-enlisting either indorse their past acts or consent to serve under them any longer. In speaking of officers I do not intend to include the Doctor here, as he longs, I believe to the 2d Cavalry, and in common with most officers of that favored regiment, is

every inch a gentleman and a soldier, but I intend simply to confine my remarks the present Commander of the Post, and Lieutenant Hill. Of the quality of the latter you can judge something yourself as you say that he did you the honor of letting you have a peep at his phiz, and when I tell you the other is more than twice as mean a man as *he* dare be, you will have a pretty good idea of the two men in question. Governor Downey in appointing these men, in common with many other officers of this regiment who have already been expelled the service, must have intended to spite the people for refusing to re-elect him to office, and the volunteers for enlisting in the cause of the Union.

But you requested me to state some of the principle causes of complaint, which I will now do. Soon after the enrolling officer was here, finding that none of the men would re-enlist, Capt. Schmidt was heard to say that he would "put them through." How well he has kept his word you can judge by what follows. He commenced by increasing the fatigue to eight hours a day, and then put the whole garrison on fatigue and daily duty, and besides their hard fatigue duties they were compelled to stand their regular guard with only two and three nights in bed. The work consisted of moving adobe buildings, digging ditches, sweeping in about the enclosure of the barracks and building fences. It has been pretty severe on the men as they had supposed until now that they had enlisted as soldiers and not as hirelings to work for \$13 in greenbacks per month, fencing and improving land for a grant-holder who is well known to be of rebel proclivities though he has, I believe, two or three times taken the oath. But the work is nothing compared with the food we had while doing it. The officers claim the right of taking our flour rations,

and giving us from 18 to 20 ounces of bread in place of it, and as a pound of flour will make 22 oz. of bread they save a large amount out of us. If we want any more bread we have to pay them for it before we can get it. By this means they make money out of us, but we cannot tell how much, nor what becomes of it. It is not often that any of it is expended for our benefit. Our beef arrangement is not much better. They pay Bishop (the man with rebel proclivities), as I understand, thirteen dollars per hundred for beef, while cattle here are worth only eight or ten dollars per head. These are caught by the vaquaros among the hills and dragged foaming and frothing at the mouth down to the Fort and butchered in hot blood and as a matter of course the blood remains in the meat and does not improve its quality in the least, though it has a tendency to increase its weight a little. I cannot say whether the officers here profit any by this beef contract or not, but I do know that it has been quite a common thing for officers in this regiment to do so. I am credibly informed that they get all the mild and other luxuries they want of the same parties free of cost, while enlisted men have to pay \$1.00 per gallon, and I doubt very much whether they pay anything for the beef they use in their messes. About the other provisions drawn from the commissary I am not so well informed, but some how or other everything seems to fall short, and the cooks have to continually stint the men to have the provisions hold out the required length of time, and they have lately quite often had meat only once a day and sometimes none at all unless they procure it themselves. We cannot account for this shortening of provisions. There has been no order issued for it, and we cannot see the necessity of it.

The forage arrangements seem to be in no better fix than the above. Some times since one of the teamsters told me that he had seen an official monthly report which charged each team with the usual amount of forage, and he said he was willing to take his oath that his mules had not received a pound of barley during the month.

Besides what I have already stated the men are continually annoyed by being watched, and wo to him who happens to step beyond the bounds of rectitude. For missing a single roll call, no matter what his excuse, a man is sentenced to pack sand in front of the guard-house four days, and for getting drunk eight days, and be routed out once in two hours during the night.—Two recruits who had just arrived, not thinking that it was necessary for them to be present the first evening, missed roll call and were immediately hunted up and sent to the guard-house—the one treated to a pair of irons weighing eighteen lbs. and the other packed with sand. Also a young man named Stotts, who had recently been severely wounded by a grizzly bear, on partly recovering from his wounds was returned to duty, and the next morning not hearing reveille was sent to the guard house and packed with sand four days, which caused his wounds to reopen and he was again returned upon the "sick report."

I could go on and relate almost innumerable instances of much barbarous cruelty, equally revolting to human nature, but will desist and submit the case to the careful consideration of yourself and the readers of your excellent paper,

Very respectfully, &c.,

VERETAS (?)

ANOTHER KILLING.—A soldier named Anderson was found mortally stabbed about 1 o'clock A.M., 15th inst., one mile from Fort Tejon. He was confronted by several parties suspected of guilt but was unable to identify any of them as being the murderer. He survived till the following day.

# SOME NOTES CONCERNING THE LETTER FROM "VERETAS"

by George R. Stammerjohan

Some explanation is needed for the writer's angry opinions and the deliberate errors he made to cover his identity.

"Veretas." Based upon his style of writing, selection of words and his anger at Captain John C. Schmidt of Co. B, 2nd Infantry California Volunteers is probably First Sergeant Greenleaf Curtis, who later settled in Del Norte County of California. Curtis was a ladies' man, and a young, angry soldier. His journal can be found at the Del Norte County Historical Society Museum, Crescent City. There is also a revealing selection of letters at the California Pioneer Society, San Francisco. His journal, heavily edited, was published in a limited edition book in the early 1950's. The editing was so drastic that the book is worthless as an account of an opinionated, literate, romantic soldier of the California Civil War era.

The Indians. In mid-1863, approximately 1000 Owen's Valley Paiutes were forced marched to the southern San Joaquin Valley. Possibly 50 died on the trek and another 50 or more left the column and started home. Three hundred plus natives were camped just downhill from Fort Tejon. The Indian agent for southern California wanted nothing to do with the 900 natives scattered about the south end of the region. The agent had no money to feed the Indians. The 2nd Cavalry C.V. officers had begun to feed the natives hard tack and salt pork, to keep them from running away.

When Captain John C. Schmidt assumed command at Fort Tejon, on Jan. 15, 1864, he found "380 Indians located about 300 yards below the fort...almost in a state of starvation; as they were under no one's charge and no one to care for them." Schmidt was not aware that the officers of the 2nd Cavalry, California Volunteers, had been feeding the Indians out of their own rations, by declaring them "prisoners-of-war" and hoping the government, or the Army, would not charge their own Commissary accounts against them. Meaning the officers would have to cough up the money to pay the government. Dept of the Pacific had finally approved the actions of the officers of the 2nd Cavalry, C.V. when Schmidt arrived, unaware of what had been going on, the Indians were once again without food.

In mid-1864, the Indian agent for southern California finally received permission from the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California, who now had a budget, to feed captive Indians. By then, many of the Paiutes had started to walk home to the Owens Valley. The "bounty" mentioned was a land warrant worth 160 acres of unclaimed federal land.

The three-year enlistment of unhappy soldiers of the 2nd Infantry California Volunteers was up in late August 1864. Like many Union soldiers of mid-1864, they were ready to go home due to lack of money — a scarcity of coinage in government coffers — the volunteers had not been paid for months. This seems amazing in gold-rich California, but the Army needed approval to spend money, and budgets for California were not a high priority.

The doctor, Captain George Van Horn of Pennsylvania had traveled to California to gain a volunteer medical commission after failing to achieve a doctor's commission in the east. An expert on beetles, Van Horn also saw a chance to collect western insects. One officer claimed the doctor, while at Fort Tejon, spent most of his day turning over old rotten logs and catching bugs. The doctor, assigned to the 1st Infantry Calif Volunteers, was on detached duties at the Fort. He would later serve in Arizona.

It is interesting that the soldier-writer, "Veretas," a member of the 2nd Infantry, C.V. tried to level acclaim for the officers of the 2nd Cavalry, C.V., declaring it "a favored regiment" and calling the officers "gentlemen and soldiers." Company B, 2nd Infantry had little involvement with the companies of the 2nd Cavalry C.V. who had spent much of their time in the Owens Valley and southern San Joaquin Valley, where as the 2nd Infantry was just arriving in the southern San Joaquin area. The 2nd Cavalry had never been a well organized unit. On mustering in, its headquarters and two companies had gone to Utah; its battalion command was never functional and its companies had been further scattered. One company had gone to New Mexico with the California column. Several companies had gone to Fort Humboldt with the 2nd Infantry and other companies had seen rough field duty in the Owens Valley.

"Veretas" then directs his ire at the commander of the post, Capt. J.C. Schmidt, as well as Lieut Hill. Greenleaf Curtis had a special hate for Captain Schmidt, partly due to Schmidt's language problems. Schmidt spoke German better than English. He was reputedly partial to the mostly German company (Co. B.) and, worse, Curtis blamed Hill and particularly Schmidt for blocking his

expected commission to the grade of Lieutenant. Curtis felt he was a certain candidate for officers' rank. He blamed Schmidt for not properly endorsing the promotion. Actually, Schmidt wrote a very favorable review of Curtis' application, but the commission was blocked by the Lieut. Colonel of the regiment. Curtis never saw the rejection, but blamed Hill and Schmidt for his failure to gain a commission.

Governor John G. Downey had been elected Lieut. Governor in 1859. The Governor Latham stepped down and Downey became Governor. Downey was a Douglas Democrat and in 1861, supported the Union Party. He was not a candidate for re-election. Downey, obviously a politician, did appoint mostly pro-Union Democrats, many without military experience. But, in 1861 when the 2nd Infantry was organized, Downey had to find not 36 officers for the 2nd Infantry, but some 154 officers for the four other regiments that he called to service in August 1861. Downey appointed the best he could find and most of his commissioned officers passed muster by Generals Edwin V. Sumner and George Wright of the regular army. Curtis never accepted this; he was a staunch Republican. Capt. Schmidt was disappointed by his men not wanting to re-enlist, but he had also been criticized in April, 1864, for letting his "short-timers" becoming lax and ill disciplined. He was prodded for letting the post fall into disrepair and in effect, told to get his act together.

Also, Schmidt was receiving alarming, if false information, that secessionists to the east of him, particularly in Tehachapi Valley, that "hordes of secessionists" were arming themselves and were about to attack someone. Schmidt at times fell for this canard. Thinking that that rebel leader Harpending was in the Tehachapi area he informed headquarters that not only were Indians about to cause problems, but that wild Harpending was organizing rebels to strike at forts and other unprotected settlements.

In Markleville, citizens hungry for government money were writing to San Francisco that "secret organizations...from throughout the state" were preparing "a system of guerilla warfare and wholesale plundering" and were about to launch a campaign of murder, theft and rapine upon poor unarmed citizens, who were without defense and needed companies of soldiers stationed in their villages to protect them. Unsaid was that the same citizens would enjoy the fruits of government payrolls. The whole of California experienced in the spring of 1864 the wild rumors of thousands of secret secessionists about to strike terror on fearful and deserving citizens. That such secret societies and organizations were myths of hungry merchants were immaterial. Nevertheless, Army officers with unwilling, unhappy volunteer short-timers who wanted to go home, had to at least take notice, and keep their men prepared in case the fantasy was real.

"Veretas" sounds like the typical disgruntled short-timer volunteer. The men at Fort Tejon were bored, had nothing but routine garrison duty to perform, and did not want to be at Fort Tejon. The town of Tejon had disappeared; there were no local saloons, no girls and the men wanted to go home. And their time was almost up.

Samuel A. Bishop did not have "rebel proclivities." He was a state's rights Douglas Democrat. These conservative Democrats, who did not supported the Lincoln administration but were pro-Union, were regularly lambasted as "Rebels" or "Secessionists."

It should be pointed out that while Greenleaf Curtis, a loyal First Sergeant, took his discharge and moved on to the logging town of Crescent City, where he became an active member of the Grand Army of the Republic, Captain John C. Schmidt stayed in the re-organized 2nd Infantry with the rank of Major, was assigned to the Fort Humboldt district and was engaged in protecting the logging community of Crescent City during Indian troubles in 1865-1866, when the local veterans of the California volunteers refused to protect themselves without support by federal troops.—