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**THE CHICAGO CONSPIRACY.**

On the eve of the last general election, the country was startled by the publication of a Report from the Judge Advocate of the United States, disclosing the existence of a wide-spread conspiracy at the West, which had for its object the overthrow of the Union. The conspiracy, the Report stated had a military organization, with a commander-in-chief, general and subordinate officers, and 500,000 enrolled members, all bound to a blind obedience to the orders of their superiors, and pledged to "take up arms against any government found waging war against a people endeavoring to establish a government of their own choice."

The organization, it was said, was in every way hostile to the Union, and friendly to the so-called Confederacy; and its ultimate objects were "rising in Indiana, Ohio, Illinois and Kentucky, in co-operation with the rebel forces which was to invade the last-named State."

Startling and incredible as the report seemed, it told nothing but the truth, and it did not tell the whole truth. It omitted to state that the organization was planned in Richmond; that its operators were directed by Jacob Thompson, who was in Canada for that purpose; and that wholesale robbery, arson and midnight assassination were among its devices.

The point marked out for the first attack was Camp Douglas, at Chicago. The 8,000 rebel soldiers confined there, being liberated and armed, were to be joined by the Canadian refugees and Missouri "Butternuts" engaged in their release, and 5,000 and more members of the treasonable order resident in Chicago. This force, of nearly 20,000 men would be a nucleus about which the conspirators in other parts of Illinois could gather; and being joined by the prisoners liberated from other camps, and members of the order from other States, would form an army of a hundred thousand strong. So fully had everything been foreseen and provided for, that the leaders expected to gather and organize this vast body of men within a fortnight! The United States could bring into the field no forces capable of withstanding the progress of such an army. The consequences would be that the whole character of the war would be changed—its theater would be shifted from the border to the heart of the free States; and southern independence, and the beginning at the North of that process of disintegration so confidently counted on by the rebel leaders at the outbreak of hostilities, would have followed.

What saved the nation from being drawn into this whirlpool of ruin! Nothing but the cool brain, sleepless vigilance and wonderful sagacity of one man—a young officer never read in the newspapers—removed from field duty because of disability, but commissioned, I very believe, by Providence itself to ferret out and foil this deeper-laid, widespread and more diabolical conspiracy than any that darkens the page of history. Other men—and women, too—were instrumental in dragging the dark inquiry to light; but they failed to fathom its full enormity, and to discover its point of outbreak. He did that; and he throttled the tiger when about to spring, and so deserves the lasting gratitude of his country. How he did it I propose to tell in this paper. It is a marvelous tale; it will read more like romance than history; but, calling to mind what a good man once said to me, "Write the truth; let people doubt it if they will," I shall narrate the facts.

There is nothing remarkable in the appearance of this young man. Nearly six feet high, he has an erect military carriage, a frank, manly face, and looks every inch a soldier—such a soldier as would stand up all day in a square hand-to-hand fight with an open enemy; but the keenest eye would detect in him no indication of the crafty genius which delights to follow the windings of wickedness when burrowing in the dark. But it is not a Fouché or a Vidocq, he is certainly an able man; for, in a section where able men are as plenty as apple-blossoms in June, he was chosen to represent his district in the State Senate, and, entering the army as a subaltern officer, rose, before the battle of Perryville, to the command of a regiment. At that battle a rebel bullet entered his shoulder and crushed the bones of his right elbow. This disabled him for field duty, and so it came about that he assumed the light blue of the veterans, and on the second day of May, 1864, succeeded Gen. Orme in command of the military post at Chicago.

When fairly settled in the low-roofed shanty which stands, a sort of mute sentry, over the front gateway of Camp Douglas, the new commandant, as was natural, look-

ed about him. He found the camp—about sixty acres of flat, sandy soil, inclosed by a tight board fence, an inch thick and fourteen feet high—had a garrison of but two regiments of veteran reserves. Numbering, all told, only 700 men fit for duty. This small force was guarding 8,000 rebel prisoners, one-third of whom were Texas rangers and guerrillas who had served under Morgan—wild, reckless characters, fonder of a fight than a dinner, and ready for any enterprise, however desperate, that held out the smallest prospect of freedom. To add to the seeming insecurity, nearly every office in the camp was filled with these prisoners. They served out rations and distributed clothing to their comrades, dealt out ammunition to the guards, and even kept the records in the quarters of the Commandant. In fact, the prison was in charge of the prisoners, not the prisoners in charge of the prison. This state of things underwent a sudden change. With the exception of a very few, whose character recommended them to peculiar confidence, all were at once placed where they belonged—on the inner side of the prison fence.

A post office was connected with the camp and this next received the Commandant's attention. Everything about it appeared to be regular. A vast number of letters came and went, but they all passed unsealed, and seemed to contain nothing contraband. Many of them, however, were short epistles on long pieces of paper, a curious circumstance among correspondents with whom stationery was scarce and greenbacks not over plenty. One sultry day in June the Commandant built a fire, and gave these letters a warming, and lo! presto! the white spaces broke out into dark lines breathing thoughts blacker than the fluid that wrote them.—Corporal Snooks whispered to his wife, away down in Texas, "The fourth of July is comin', Sukey, so be a man; fur I'm gwine to celebrate. I'm gwine up like a rocket, ef I dose come down loike a stick." And Sergeant Blower said to John Coperhead of Chicago, "Down in 'old Virginia' I used to think the fourth of July was a humbug, but this prison has made me a patriot. Now, I'd like to burn an alford sight of powder, and if you help, and God is willing, I shall do it." In a similar strain wrote half a score of them.

Such patriotism seemed altogether too wordy to be genuine. It told nothing, but darkly hinted at events to come.—The Commandant bethought him that the Democratic Convention would assemble on the 4th of July; that a vast multitude of people would congregate at Chicago on that occasion; and that, in so great a throng, it would be easy for the clans to gather, attack the camp, and liberate the prisoners. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and the young Commandant was vigilant. Soon Prison Square received a fresh installment of prisoners. They were genuine "Butternuts," out at the toes, out at the elbows, out everywhere, in fact, and of every thing but their senses. Those they had snugly about them. They fraternized with Corporal Snooks, Sergeant Blower, and others of their comrades, and soon learned that a grand pyrotechnic display was arranged to come off on Independence day. A huge bonfire was to be built outside, and the prisoners were to salute the old flag, but not with blank cartridges.

But who was to light the outside bonfire? That the improvised "Butternuts" failed to discover, and the Commandant set his own wits to working. He soon ascertained that a singular organization existed in Chicago. It was called "The Society of Illini," and its object, as set forth in its printed constitution, was the literary, scientific, moral, physical, and social welfare of the conservative citizens of Chicago." The Commandant knew a conservative citizen whose development was not altogether perfect, and he recommended him to join the organization.—The society needed recruits and initiation fees, and received the new member with open arms. Soon he was deep in the outer secrets of the order; but he could not penetrate its inner mysteries.—Those were open to only an elect few who had already attained to a "perfect development"—of villany. He learned enough, however, to verify the dark hints thrown out by the prisoners. The society numbered some thousands of members, all fully armed, thoroughly drilled, and impatiently waiting a signal to explode a mine deeper than that in front of Petersburg.

But the assembling of the Chicago Convention was postponed to the 29th of August, and the 4th of July passed away without the bonfire and the fireworks. The Commandant, however, did not sleep. He still kept his wits at work; and the red flames still brought out the black thoughts on the white letter paper. Quietly the garrison was re-enforced, quietly increased vigilance was enjoined upon the sentinels; and the tranquil, assured look of the Commandant told no one that he was playing with hot coals on a barrel of gunpowder.

So July rolled away into August, and the Commandant sent a letter giving his view of the state of things to his commanding-General. This letter has fallen into my hands, and as might sometimes make right, I shall copy a portion of it. It is dated August 12th, and, in the

formal phrase customary among military men, begins:

"I have the honor respectfully to report, in relation to the supposed organization at Toronto, Canada, which was to come here in squads, and combine, and attempt to rescue the prisoners of war at Camp Douglas, that there is an armed organization in this city of 5,000 men, and that the rescue of our prisoners would be the signal for a general insurrection in Indiana and Illinois."

"There is little, if any doubt that an organization hostile to the Government, and secret in its workings and character, exists in the States of Indiana and Illinois, and that this organization is strong in numbers. It would be easy, perhaps, at any crisis in public affairs, to push this organization into acts of open disloyalty, if its leaders should so will."

"Except in cases of considerable emergency, I shall make all communications to your headquarters on this subject by mail."

These extracts show that seventeen days before the assembling of the Chicago Convention, the Commandant had become convinced that mail-bags were safer vehicles of communication than telegraph-wires; that 5,000 armed traitors were then domiciled in Chicago, that they expected to be joined by a body of the rebels from Canada; that the object of the combination was the rescue of the prisoners at Camp Douglas, and that success in that enterprise would be the signal for a general uprising throughout Indiana and Illinois. Certainly, this was no little knowledge to gain by two months' burrowing in the dark. But the conspirators were not fools. They had necks which they valued. They would not plunge into open disloyalty until some "crisis in public affairs" should engage the attention of the authorities, and afford a fair chance of success. Would the assembling of the Convention be such a crisis? was now the question.

This question was answered. About this time Lieut. Col. B. H. Hill, commanding the Military district of Michigan, received a missive from a person in Canada who represented himself to be a Major in the Confederate service. He expressed a readiness to disclose a dangerous plot against the Government, provided he were allowed to take the oath of allegiance, and rewarded according to the value of his information. The Lieutenant-Colonel read the letter, tossed it aside, and went about his business. No good, he had heard, ever came out of Nazareth. Soon another missive of the same purport, and from the same person, came to him. He tossed this aside also, and went again about his business. But the Major was a Southern Yankee,—the "custest" sort of Yankee. He had something to sell, and was bound to sell it even if he had to throw his neck into the bargain. Taking his life in his hand, he crossed the frontier; and so it came about, that, late one night, a tall man, in a slouched hat, rusty regimentals, and immense jack-boots, was ushered into the private apartment of the Lieutenant-Colonel at Detroit. It was the Major. He had brought his wares with him. They had cost him nothing, except some small sacrifice of such trivial matters as honor, fraternal feeling, and good faith towards brother conspirators, whom they might send to the gallows; but they were of immense value—would save millions of money and rivers of loyal blood. So the Major said, and so the Lieut.-Colonel thought, as coolly, with his cigar in his mouth, and his legs over the arm of his chair, he drew the important secrets from the rebel officer. Something good, might come, after all out of Nazareth. The Lieut.-Colonel would trust the fellow—trust him, but pay him nothing, and send him back to Toronto to worm out the whole plan from the rebel leaders, and to gather the whole details of the projected expedition. But the Major knew with whom he was dealing. He had faith in Uncle Sam, and he was right in having it; for, truth to tell, if Uncle Sam does not always pay, he can always be trusted.

It was not long before the Major reappeared with his bag, which he duly opened to the Lieutenant-Colonel. Its contents were interesting, and I will give them to the reader as the Union officer gave them to the General commanding the Northern Department. His communication is dated August 16th. It says:

"I have the honor to report that I had another interview last evening with Major —, whose disclosures in relation to a rebel plot for the release of the prisoners at Camp Douglas I gave you in my letter of the 8th inst. I have caused inquiries to be made in Canada about Major —, and understand that he does possess the confidence of the rebel agents, and that his statements are entitled to respect."

"He now informs me that he proceeded to Toronto, as he stated he would when I last saw him; that about 200 picked men, of the rebel refugees in Canada, are assembled in that place, who are armed with revolvers, and supplied with funds and transportation tickets to Chicago; and that already 150 have proceeded to Chicago. That he (Major —) and the balance of the man are waiting for instruction from Capt. Hines, who is the commander of the expedition; the Capt. Hines left Toronto last Thursday for Chicago, and at this time is doubtless at Niagara Falls, making the final arrangements with the chief rebel agent."

"Major — states that Sanders, Hal-

brook, and Colonel Hicks were at Toronto, while he was there, engaged in making preparations, &c. The general plan is to accomplish the release of the prisoners at Camp Douglas, and in doing so they will be assisted by an armed organization at Chicago. After being released, the prisoners will be armed, and being joined by the organization in Chicago, will be mounted and proceed to Camp Morton, at Indianapolis, and there accomplish a similar object in releasing prisoners. That for some months rebel emissaries have been traveling through the North West; that their arrangements are fully matured, and that they expect to receive large accessions of force from Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. They expect to destroy the works at Morton."

"Major — says further that he is in hourly expectation of receiving instructions to proceed to Chicago with the balance of the party; that he shall put up at the City Hotel, corner of Lake and State streets, and register his name as George —; and that he will then place himself in communication with Col. Sweet, commanding at Chicago."

The Major did not "put up at the corner of Lake and State streets," and that fact relieved the Government from the trouble of estimating the value of his services, and what is more to be deplored, rendered it impossible for the commandant to recognize and arrest the rebel leaders during the sitting of the Chicago Convention. What became of the Major is not known. He may have repented of his good deeds, or his treachery may have been detected and he put out of the way by his accomplices.

It will be noticed how closely the rebel officer's disclosures accorded with the information gathered through indirect channels by the astute Commandant. When the report was conveyed to him, he may have smiled at this proof of his own sagacity; but he made no change in his arrangements. Quietly and steadily he went on strengthening the camp, augmenting the garrison, and shadowing the footsteps of all suspicious new-comers.

At last the loyal Democrats came together to the great Convention, and with them came Satan also. Bands of ill-favored men, in bushy hair, bad whisky, and seedy homespun, staggered from the railway stations and hung about the street corners. A reader of Danta or Swedenborg would have taken them for the delegates from the lower regions, had not their clothing been plainly perishable, while devils wear everlasting garments. They had come they announced, to make a Peace President, but they brandished bowie-knives, and bellowed for war in the sacred precincts of the Peace Convention. But war or peace, the Commandant was ready for it.

For days re-enforcements poured into camp, until it actually bristled with bayonets. On every side it was guarded with cannon, and day and night mounted men patrolled the avenues to give notice of the first hostile gathering. But there was no gathering. The conspirators were there, 2,000 strong, with 5,000 Illini to back them. From every point of the compass—from Canada, Missouri, Southern Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, New York, and even loyal Vermont, bloody minded men had come to give the Peace candidate a red baptism. But "discretion is the better part of valor." The conspirators saw the preparation and disbanded. Not long afterwards one of the leaders said to me, "We had spies in every public place—in the telegraph office, the camp itself, and even close by the Commandant's headquarters, and knew hourly all that was passing. From the observatory, opposite the camp, I myself saw the arrangements for our reception. We outnumbered you two to one, but our force was badly disciplined. Success in such circumstances was impossible; and on the third day of the Convention we announced from headquarters that an attack at that time was impracticable. It would have cost the lives of hundreds of the prisoners, and perhaps the capture or destruction of the whole of us." So the storm blew over without the leaden rain, and without the accompaniment of thunder and lightning.

A dead calm followed, during which the Illini slunk back to their holes; the prisoners took to honest ink; the bogus "Butternuts" walked the streets clad like Christians, and the Commandant went to sleep with only one eye open.—So the world rolled around into November.

The Presidential election was near at hand—the great contest on which hung the fate of the Republic. The Commandant was convinced of this, and wanted to marshal his old constituents for the final struggle between Freedom and Despotism. He obtained a furlough to go home and mount the stump for the Union. He was about to set out, his private secretary was ready, and the carriage waiting at the gateway, when an indefinable feeling took possession of him, holding him back, and warning him of coming danger. It would not be shaken off, and reluctantly he postponed the journey until the morrow. Before the morrow facts were developed which made his presence in Chicago essential to the safety of the city and the lives of the citizens. The snake was scotched, not killed. It was preparing for another and deadlier spring.

On the 2d of November, a well-known citizen of St. Louis, openly a secessionist, but secretly a loyal man, acting as a detective for the Government, left that city in pursuit of a criminal. He followed

him to Springfield, traced him from there to Chicago, and on the morning of November 4th, about the hour the Commandant had the singular impression I have spoken of, arrived in the latter city. He soon learned that the bird had again flown.

"While passing along the street," (I now quote from his report to the Provost-Marshal-General, of Missouri,) "and trying to decide what course to pursue—whether to follow this man to New York, or return to St. Louis—I met an old acquaintance, a member of the order of 'American Knights,' who informed me that Marmaduke was in Chicago. After conversing with him a while, I started up the street, and about one block further on met Dr. E. W. Edwards, a practicing physician in Chicago, (another old acquaintance, who asked me if I knew of Southern soldiers being in town. I told him I did; that Marmaduke was there. He seemed very much astonished, and asked me how I knew. I told him. He laughed, and then said that Marmaduke was at his house, under the assumed name of Burling, and mentioned as a good joke, that he had a British passport, vised by the United States consul under that name. I gave Edwards my card to hand to Marmaduke (who was another 'old acquaintance'), and told him that I was stopping at the Briggs House."

"That same evening I again met Dr. Edwards on the street, going to my hotel. He said Marmaduke desired to see me, and I accompanied him to his house."—There, in the course of a long conversation, Marmaduke told me that he and several other Rebel officers were in Chicago to cooperate with other parties in releasing the prisoners of Camp Douglas and other prisoners, and inaugurating a rebellion at the North. He said the movement was under the auspices of the "Order of American Knights" (to which order the society of the Illini belonged,) and was to begin operations by an attack on Camp Douglas on election day."

The detective did not know the Commandant, but he soon made his acquaintance and told him the story. "The young man," he says, "rested his head upon his hand, and looked as if he had lost his mother." And well he might! A mine has opened at his feet; with but 800 men in the garrison it was to be sprung upon him. Only seventy hours were left! What would he give for twice as many? Then he might secure reinforcements. He walked the room for a time in silence, then, turning to the detective, said, "Do you know where the other leaders are?" "I do not." "Can't you find out from Marmaduke?" "I think not." He said what he did say voluntarily. If I were to question him he would suspect me." That was true and Marmaduke was not of the stuff that betrays a comrade on compulsion. His arrest, therefore, would profit nothing, and might hasten the attack for which the Commandant was so poorly prepared.—He sat down and wrote a hurried dispatch to his General. Troops! troops! for God's sake, troops! was its burden. Sending it off by a courier—the telegraph told tales—he rose, and again walked the room in silence. After awhile, with a heavy heart, the detective said "Good night and left him."

What passed with the Commandant during the next two hours I do not know. He may have prayed—he is a praying man—and there was need of prayer, for the torch was ready to burn millions of property, the knife whetted to take thousands of lives. At the end of the two hours, a stranger was ushered into the apartment where the Commandant was still pacing the floor. From the lips and pen of this stranger I have what followed and I think it may be relied on.

He was a slim, light haired young man with fine, regular features and that indefinable air which denotes good breeding. Recognizing the Commandant by the eagle on his shoulder, he said, "Can I see you alone sir?" "Certainly," answered the Union officer, motioning to his secretary to leave the room. "I am a Colonel in the Rebel army," said the stranger, "and have put my life in your hands to warn you of the most hellish plot in history." "Your life is safe, sir," replied the other, "if your visit is an honest one. I shall be glad to hear what you have to say. Be seated."

The Rebel officer took the proffered chair and sat there till far into the morning. In the limits of a magazine article I cannot attempt to recount all that passed between them. The written statement the Colonel has sent to me covers fourteen pages of closely written foolscap; and my interview with him on the subject lasted five hours, by a slow watch.—He disclosed all that Judge Holt has made public, and a great deal more.—Sixty days previously he had left Richmond with verbal dispatches from the Rebel Secretary of War to Jacob Thompson, the Rebel agent in Canada. These dispatches had relation to a vast plot, designed to wrap the West in flames, sever it from the East, and secure the independence of the South. Months before, the plot had been concocted by Jeff Davis at Richmond, and in May previous, Thompson, supplied with \$250,000 in sterling exchange, had been sent to Canada to superintend its execution. This money was lodged in a bank at Montreal, and had furnished the funds which had fitted out the abortive expeditions against Johnson's Island and Camp Douglas.—The plot embraced the order of "American Knights," which was spread all over

the West, and numbered 500,000 men, 350,000 of whom were armed. A force of 1,200 men—Canadian refugees, and bushwhackers from Southern Illinois and Missouri—was to attack Camp Douglas on Tuesday night, the 8th of November liberate and arm the prisoners, and sack Chicago. This was to be the signal for a general uprising through the West, and for a simultaneous advance by Hood upon Nashville, Buckner upon Louisville, and Price upon St. Louis. Vallandigham was to head the movement in Ohio, Bowles in Indiana, and Walsh in Illinois. The forces were to rendezvous at Cincinnati and Dayton in Ohio, New Albany Indianapolis in Indiana, and Rock Island, Chicago and Springfield in Illinois; and those gathered at the last named place, after seizing the arsenal, were to march to aid Price in taking St. Louis. Prominent Union citizens and officers were to be seized and sent South, and the more obnoxious of them were to be assassinated. All places taken were to be sacked and destroyed, and a band of a hundred desperate men was organized to burn the larger Northern cities not included in the field of operations. Two hundred Confederate officers, who were to direct the military movements, had been in Canada, but were then stationed throughout the West, at the various points to be attacked, waiting the outbreak at Chicago.—Captain Hines, who had won the confidence of Thompson by his successful management of the escape of John Morgan, had control of the initial movement against Camp Douglas; but Colonel Grenfell, assisted by Colonel Marmaduke and a dozen other Rebel officers, was to manage the military part of the operations. All of these officers were at that moment in Chicago, waiting the arrival of the men, who were to come in small squads, over different roads, during the following three days. The Rebel officer had known of the plot for months, but its atrocious details had come to his knowledge only within a fortnight. They apprised him; and though he was betraying his friends, and the South which he loved, the humanity in him would not let him rest till he had washed his hands of the horrible crime.

The Commandant listened with nervous interest to the whole of this recital; but when the Southern officer made the last remark, he almost groaned out, "Why did you not come before?"

"I could not. I gave Thompson my opinion of this, and have watched. I think they have tracked me here. My life on your streets wouldn't be worth a bad half dollar."

"True; but what must be done?"

"Arrest the 'Butternuts' as they come into Chicago."

"That I can do; but the leaders are here with five thousand Illini to back them. I must take them. Do you know them?"

"Yes; but do not know where they are quartered."

At two o'clock the Commandant showed the Rebel officer to his bed, went back himself, and paced the floor until sunrise. In the morning his plan was formed. It was a desperate plan; but desperate circumstances require desperate expedients.

In the prison was a young Texan who had served on Bragg's staff and under Morgan in Kentucky, and was, therefore, acquainted with Hines, Greenfell, and the other rebel officers. He fully believed in the theory of State Rights, that is, that a part is greater than the whole, but was an honest man, whose word when given could be trusted. One glance at his open, resolute face showed that he feared nothing; that he had, too, that rare courage that delights in danger, and courts heroic enterprise from love of peril. Early in the war he had encountered Colonel DeLand, a former commandant of the post on the battle-field and taken him prisoner. A friendship then sprang up between the two which, when the tables were turned, and the captor became the captive, was not forgotten. Colonel DeLand made him his chief clerk in the medical department, and gave him every possible freedom. At that time it was the custom to allow citizens free access to the camp; and among the many good men and women who came to visit and aid the prisoners was a young woman, the daughter of a well-known resident of Chicago. She met the Texan, and a result as natural as the Union of oxygen and hydrogen followed,—but since Adam courted Eve, who ever heard of wooing going on in a prison? "It is not exactly the thing," said Colonel DeLand; "had you not better pay your addresses at the lady's house, like a gentleman?" A guard accompanied the prisoner; but it was shrewdly guessed that he stayed outside, or paid court to the girls in the kitchen.

This was the state of things when the present Commandant took charge of the camp. He learned the facts, studied the prisoner's face, and remembered that he, too, once went a courting. As he walked his room that Friday night, he thought him of the Texan. Did he love his State better than he did his affianced wife? The Commandant would test him.

"But I shall betray my friends! Can I do that in honor?" asked the Texan.

"Did you ask that question when you betrayed your country?" answered the Commandant.

"Let me go from camp for an hour.—Then I will give you my decision."

"Very well."

And, unattended, the Texan left the prison.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)