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National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Crisis Soldier's issue

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A LETTER FROM GENERAL BALLOU

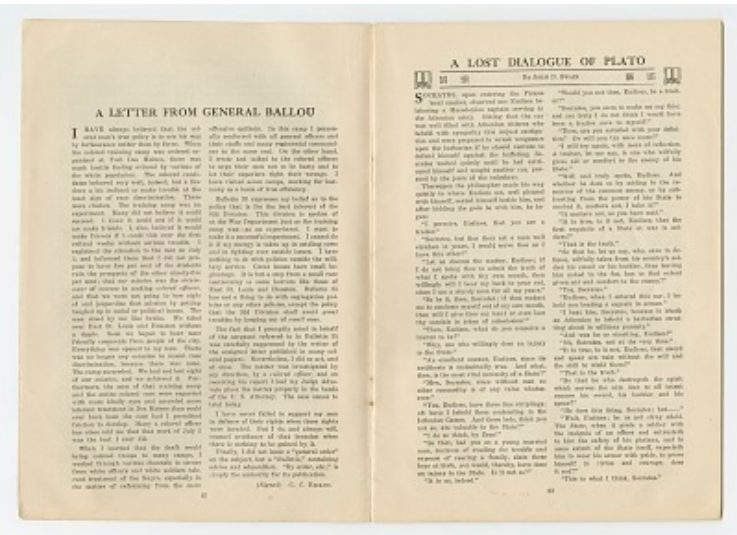
[[two-columnled text on page]]

I have always believed that the colored man's true policy is to win his way by forbearance rather than by force. When the colored training camp was ordered organized at Fort Des Moines, there was much hostile feeling evinced by various of the white population. The colored candidates behaved very well, indeed; but a few were a bit inclined to make trouble at the least sign of race discrimination. There were clashes. The training camp was an experiment. Many did not believe it could succeed. I knew it could not if it could not make friends. I, also, believed it would make friends if I could tide over the first critical weeks without serious trouble. I explained the situation to the men on July 3, and informed them that I did not propose to have five per cent of the students ruin the prospects of the other ninety-five per cent; that our mission was the attainment of success in making colored officers, and that we were not going to lose sight of and jeopardize that mission by getting tangled up in social or political issues. The men stood by like bricks. We tied over East St. Louis and Houston without a ripple. Soon we began to hear most friendly comments from people of the city. Everything was opened to my men. There was no longer any occasion to resent race discrimination, because there was none. The camp succeeded. We had not lost sight of our mission, we achieved it. Furthermore, the men of that training camp and the entire colored race were regarded with more kindly eyes and accorded more tolerant treatment in Des Moines than could ever have been the case had I permitted friction to develop. Many a colored officer has since told me that that work of July 3 was the best I ever did.

When I learned that the draft would bring colored troops to many camps, I worked through various channels to secure from white officers and white soldiers tolerant treatment of the Negro, especially in the matter of refraining from the more offensive epithets. In this camp I personally conferred with all general officers and their staffs and many regimental commanders to the same end. On the other hand, I wrote and talked to the colored officers to urge their men not to be hasty and to let their superiors right their wrongs. I have visited seven camps, working for harmony as a basis of true efficiency.

Bulletin 35 expresses my belief as to the policy that is for the best interest of the 92d Division. This division is spoken of at the War Department just as the training camp was--as an experiment. I want to make it a successful experiment. I cannot do it if my energy is taken up in settling rows and in fighting over outside issues. I have nothing to do with policies outside the military services. Great issues have small beginnings. It is but a step from a small race controversy to some horrors like those of East St. Louis and Houston. Bulletin 35 has not a thing to do with segregation policies or any other policies, except the policy that the 92d Division shall avoid great troubles by keeping out of small ones.

The fact that I promptly acted in behalf of the sergeant referred to in Bulletin 35 was carefully suppressed by the writer of the unsigned letter published in many colored papers. Nevertheless, I did so act, and at once. The matter was investigated by my direction, by a *colored officer* and on receiving his report I had my Judge Advocate place the matter properly in the hands of the U. S. Attorney. The case comes to trial today.



I have never failed to support my men in defense of their rights when those rights were invaded. But I do, and always will, counsel avoidance of that invasion when there is nothing to be gained by it.

Finally, I did not issue a "general order" on the subject, but a "Bulletin,"*[[/italics]]* containing advice and admonition. "By order, etc.," is simply the authority for its publication.

(Signed) C. C. BALLOU.

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A LOST DIALOGUE OF PLATO
[[image - left and right border art]] By John D. Swain

[[text in two columns]]
Socrates, upon entering the Piraeus local smoker, observed one Eudices belaboring a Macedonian captain serving in the Athenian army. Noting that the car was well filled with Athenian citizens who beheld with sympathy this unjust castigation and were prepared to wreak vengeance upon the barbarian if he should venture to defend himself against the buffeting, Socrates waited quietly until he had extricated himself and sought another car, pursued by the jeers of the onlookers.

Thereupon the philosopher made his way quietly to where Eudices sat, well pleased with himself, seated himself beside him, and after bidding the gods be with him, he began:

"I perceive, Eudices, that you are a traitor."

"Socrates, but that thou art a man well stricken in years, I would serve thee as I have this other!"

"Let us discuss the matter, Eudices; if I do not bring thee to admit the truth of what I spoke with thy own mouth, then willingly will I bear my back to your rod, since I am a sturdy man for all my years."

"So be it, then, Socrates; if thou makest me to condemn myself out of my own mouth, then will I give thee my hand or even lace thy sandals in token of submission!"

"Then, Eudices, what do you conceive a traitor to be?"

"Why, one who willingly does an injury to the State."

"An excellent answer, Eudices, since its antithesis is undoubtedly true. And what, then, is the most vital necessity of a State?"

"Men, Socrates, since without men no other commodity is of any value whatsoever."

You, Eudices, have three fine striplings; oft have I beheld them contending in the Isthmian Games. And these lads, think you not so, are valuable to the State?"

"I do so think, by Zeus!"

"So that, had you as a young married man, desirous of evading the trouble and expense of rearing a family, slain these boys at birth, you would, thereby, have done an injury to the State. Is it not so?"

"It is so, indeed."

"Would you not then, Eudices, be a traitor?"

"Socrates, you seem to make me say this; and yet truly I do not think I would have been a traitor to save myself!"

"Then, are you satisfied with your definition? Or will you try once more?"

"I will try again, with more reflection. A traitor, let me say, is one who wilfully gives aid or comfort to the enemy of his State."

"Well and truly spoke, Eudices. And whether he does so by adding to the resources of the common enemy, or by subtracting from the power of his State to combat it, matters not, I take it?"

"It matters not, as you have said."

"It is true, is it not, Eudices, that the first requisite of a State at war is soldiers?"

"That is the truth."

"So that he, let us say, who, save in defence, wilfully takes from his country's soldier his sword or his buckler, thus leaving him naked to the foe, has to that extent given aid and comfort to the enemy?"

"Yes, Socrates."

"Eudices, when I entered this car, I beheld you beating a captain in armor."

"I beat him, Socrates, because it irketh an Athenian to behold a barbarian strutting about in military panoply."

"And was he so strutting, Eudices?"

"No, Socrates, not at the very time."

"It is true, is it not, Eudices, that sword and spear are vain without the will and the skill to wield them?"

"That is the truth."

"So that he who destroyeth the spirit which nerves the arm does to all intent remove his sword, his buckler and his spear?"

"He does this thing, Socrates; but----"

"Wait, Eudices; let us not stray afield. The State, when it girds a soldier with the insignia of an officer and entrusteth to him the safety of his phalanx, and to some extent of the State itself, expecteth him to wear his armor with pride, to prove himself in virtue and courage, does it not?"

"This is what I think, Socrates."

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