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Document: *Letter from Thomas Welsh to General Orlando Willcox, dated May 13, 1863*

Transcription:

H. Q. 1st Div 9th A. C.
Hustonville May 13, 1863

~~Dear Genl Sir~~ Dear Sir:

On the Inst I submitted a statement with correspondence & orders as directed by you in reference to the letter of the Chaplain of the 27th Reg^t Mich. Vols. to the Editor of ~~the a Detroit Advertiser & Tribune~~ paper. I presume the statement has been laid before you and I trust is satisfactory. The letter has been submitted to the Chaplain and he acknowledges being the author of it, but disclaims intending any personal disrespect to his superior Officers. From the tone of the letter it seems plain that the Chaplain ~~has~~ entered Ky^{entucky} more as a Crusader against the peculiar Institution than as a Teacher of the Gospel to the men of Michigan.

The Provost Marshall has placed the Chaplain under arrest and ordered him to report to Cap^t E. F. Austin 45th Reg^t. P. Vols. (who with 15 men is guarding Kentucky River Bridge near Camp Dick Robinson). Considering all the circumstances I have deemed it best to remove him from his Reg^t for the present. I am not prepared to recommend his dismissal from the service for fear a worse man might be substituted. I imagine this lesson will be sufficient to eradicate his weakness and be the means of restoring him to usefulness in the line of his duty. The morals of the 27th are not as high toned as you would desire. as in addition to ~~Cheating~~ claiming the service of Ky^{entucky} Negroes they are equally strong on four footed Beasts.

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Some four or five Horses having allready [sic] been induced to leave Ky masters and serve the men of the 27th.

I have permitted the masters of Negroes, as well as Horses to recover their property. And hope soon to be able to ~~promise~~ announce an improvement in the morals as well as in the discipline of the Reg^t.

I am informed that an Editorial based on this letter of the Chaplain was very scurrilous on me personally—this does not offend me. it can only reflect on the Rev. Gentleman who writes. My character as a Citizen is established, as a soldier, I obey orders and endeavor to compel others to do likewise. My superiors in rank have not yet regretted, and I trust never will regret, the confidence reposed in me. Their confidence, and an easy conscience is all the reward I desire.

I received through your H.Q. a copy of Charges and specification against Col. D. M. Fox of the 27th Mich. professed by T. S. Sprague, Late Lt. Col. of the 27th ~~I have learned~~ referred to me for action in ordering a Court Martial. I have been informed (unofficially) that a copy of the same charges were sent to Gen Burnside and that the Judge Advocate from Dep^t H.Q. had visited Detroit to ~~examine~~ enquire into the charges. As the charges are based on occurrences out of this District ~~and the witness would be hard to p~~ it would be allmost [sic] impossible to ~~pre~~ bring the witnesses before a Court of my ordering. I would therefore suggest that you enquire of Dep^t H.Q in regard to the report of the Judge Advocate (~~Major~~ Curtis) and if there



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is reason to suppose the Col guilty, I would ~~suggest~~ recommend that he be tried by a Court Martial convened by Dep^t. or District H.Q. or I might send him before a Board of Examiners which I could appoint in conformity with Sec. 10 page 521 & 522 Revised Reg. If

In connection with the foregoing I would respectfully recommend that an order be issued from Dep^t or District Head Quarters prohibiting the appointment of Officers – to fill vacancies that may occur in the Reg^t. You are probably aware that the Reg^t has but 8 Companies, with an aggregate of but _____. This ~~would~~ would hardly warrant a full Field Staff & Line Commissioned, at least until a little experience ~~would~~ in the ~~field~~ Field would bring the best material to the surface.

I should not have troubled you Gen^l, with these trifling matters, was it not that the indiscreet conduct of Chaplain Hunting and his Editorial friends ~~had~~ brought them to the notice of Maj. Gen^l Burnside who it appears has directed you to take action in the matter. If you have leisure, I would be much pleased to hear from you (in an (unofficial manner) ~~or there~~

I remain your Friend
& very ob^t Sevt
Thos Welsh

To
Genl O.B. Willcox
Comg. District Central Ky
Lexington Ky

Scope and Content:

Draft of a letter from Thomas Welsh to General Orlando B. Willcox. From Hustonville, Kentucky. Deals with disciplinary matters in the 27th Michigan Regiment, including the Chaplain who wrote a plaintive letter to the Detroit Advertiser & Tribune that was also evidently disrespectful to his superior officers. Welsh arrested the Chaplain, but recommends against dismissing him from service. In another matter involving charges brought by the late Lt. Col. Sprague of the 27th against Col. Fox of the 27th, Welsh declines to convene a Court Martial, recommending that for procedural reasons it be handled at the Department or Division level instead.

