

DID CUSTER ASPIRE TO BE PRESIDENT?

A New Chapter in the Story of a Glamorous American

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

SEVENTY-FOUR years ago Cleveland, Ohio, was the scene of a meeting unique in American politics—the "Johnson Soldiers' and Sailors' Convention" of 1866. Although a relatively minor incident in President Andrew Johnson's historic struggle with Thaddeus Stevens and the other radical Republican leaders, this convention has particular interest because one of its promoters and outstanding figures was a man whose name is glamorous in our military annals.

He was George Armstrong Custer, "The Boy General," "The Murat of the American Army" and the Indian fighter par excellence until a Sioux bullet ended his spectacular career in what is specifically known as the "Custer Massacre." Custer biographers are strangely silent concerning his part in the Cleveland convention. Yet it was an important milestone in his career. For it was his first venture along a path which, there is reason to believe, he hoped might lead him to the presidency of the United States!

The story of that phase in the career of George Armstrong Custer is here told for the first time.

That Custer was an active promoter of the "Johnson Soldiers' and Sailors' Convention" is indicated by an editorial which appeared in the August 24, 1866, issue of the semi-weekly edition of Horace Greeley's New York Tribune. Headed "The Johnson Soldiers," this editorial began:

"Generals Custer, Dix, etc. urge their fellow-soldiers in the late Civil war to unite with them in holding a convention in Cleveland to pave the way for a Rebel-Copperhead triumph in the approaching election."

The Tribune was one of the leading anti-administration organs. But, granting the bias of its editorial policy, Custer must have been unusually active in Johnson's behalf, else he would not have been singled out for special notice, as he was in the Tribune's coverage of the convention.

The Cleveland convention opened in a big tent on the lake front of the Ohio city on September 17. The first dispatch sent back to the Tribune by its special correspondent refers to Custer incidentally, misspelling his name) thus:

In looking around on the members of this convention, as they assembled for business, I saw many whose histories satisfied me of their object in being here. The most prominent and conspicuous was Custer. His career is explained by the remark of an Ohio delegate, who said "Custer is a man with a deal of hair, but very little brains." Custer has been supporting the President vigorously since his evidence before the Reconstruction Committee and his reward was a promotion from Captain to Lieutenant-Colonel. . . . A Convention will be permanently organized to-morrow morning. Gens. Granger and Custer are spoken of as permanent President. . . . So also is Rousseau and Steedman. There are a number seeking the position in case of a quarrel. Mr. Doolittle (senator from Wisconsin) will settle matters. Custer is his man.

That Red Necktie!

But, as it turned out, "Custar" wasn't. Gen. John E. Wool, a veteran of the War of 1812, as well as the Mexican and Civil wars and the oldest major-general in the United States army, was made temporary president. Then, according to the Tribune correspondent's next dispatch,

Gen. Wool—poor, foolish, old man—called the Convention to order. On his right sat young, curly-haired Custer, who was easily distinguished by a bright red necktie he wore. Gen. Gordon Granger was made permanent President of the Convention. . . .

Young Custer, too, was ambitious to have the honor conferred on him but gracefully yielded at the suggestion of Senator Doolittle. Custer felt hurt at this slight, and called it ingratitude. He felt that he was the chief spirit of the Convention, and the one who first originated the scheme, but Doolittle selected George's flaxen curls, and told him it was the President's wish that an older man should be selected. So the quarrel was compromised by putting Custer on the Committee to present the proceedings of the Convention to his Excellency. This will give Granger a chance to apply for the vacant Brigadier Generalship in the Regular Army.

Even though Custer was denied the presidency of the convention, he continued to be one of its leading spirits during the two days' meeting. The Tribune dispatches repeatedly mention him—and by this time its correspondent had evidently learned to spell his name correctly! They also mention frequently his red scarf, that bright oriflamme which had been in the forefront of many a thundering cavalry charge during the Civil war.

Apparently Custer was acting as a sort of secretary of the convention, for there is also frequent mention of his receiving messages brought to the tent by "the telegraph boy." One of these telegrams and the convention action which resulted from it created a furore later. It came from Memphis, Tenn., and it was,



GEN. GEORGE A. CUSTER
In this photograph, taken by Brady in 1865, Custer wears the picturesque costume of the "Boy General"—wide felt hat, blue flannel shirt and scarlet tie.

according to the Tribune correspondent, "signed by the Rebel Gen. N. B. Forrest of guerilla and Fort Pillow fame, Gen. Chalmers of Hood's old army and Col. Galloway of that notorious Rebel sheet, The Memphis Avalanche—stating that the late Rebel soldiers—the same who massacred negro soldiers at Fort Pillow, and again, more recently, on the streets of Memphis,—in mass convention sent greeting to the Johnson soldiers here, and said they had their sympathy."

This waving of the bloody shirt by the Tribune correspondent was prophetic of the repercussions from this incident which were to come almost immediately. According to Lloyd Paul Stryker in his biography of Andrew Johnson:

Nothing could have done the Johnson cause more harm than this well-intentioned message. The convention, upon receipt of this Southern message of good will, adopted a resolution thanking the Confederate soldiers for their words of "magnanimity and kindness." This, in the minds of Thaddeus Stevens and his sycophants, was proof of treason. The Forrest telegram furnished Sumner and his followers with new "evidence" that Johnson had gone over to the Confederacy. "All other circumstances united," wrote Blaine, "did not condemn the convention in Northern opinion so deeply as this incident."

In his "A Complete Life of General George A. Custer," Capt. Frederick Whittaker, Custer's earliest biographer and his chief apologist, without referring directly to this aftermath of the affair, admits that Custer's first venture into politics, via the Cleveland convention, was an ill-advised one and he tries to excuse his hero for the error of judgment in this ingenious fashion:

Nothing hurt Custer's political and military future like the movements of this summer, all of which were due to his generous impulsive way of doing things. Honest to the backbone himself, he could not imagine that others were less so and he felt, as it were, into the midst of a den of hungry political wolves who would have picked his bones clean had he staid much longer. . . . But he was saved from the consequences of his indiscreet utterances by being ordered to Fort Riley.

It is no doubt true, as Whittaker's statement implies, that Custer's activities during the summer and autumn of 1866 seriously impaired the prestige which he had gained as a successful cavalry leader during the Civil war. This should have warned him to keep away from civilian politics but, unfortunately for him, he failed to heed that warning. During the next 10 years the American public, which had once hailed George Armstrong Custer as the beau sabreur of the Union army, had good reason to applaud him in a new role—that of the foremost Indian fighter of his day. Why he, having added to his fame as a soldier, should have ventured again into the field of politics, which had once proved so sterile for him, is one of the paradoxes of a career that is filled with inconsistencies.

For that is what he did when he became embroiled in the famous Belknap affair in the winter of 1875. He volunteered to testify before the congressional committee which was investigating charges of graft against Gen. W. W. Belknap, President Grant's secretary of war, thereby incurring the displeasure of Grant.

As the result of these latest "indiscreet utterances," Custer was deprived of command of the expedition which he was to have led against the hostile Sioux and Cheyennes in the spring of 1876 although he was eventually permitted to accompany its commander, Gen. A. H. Terry, at the head of his regiment, the Seventh cavalry. Disaster overtook him when his regiment was detached from the main column to locate the hostiles. For, at the Battle of the Little Big Horn on June 25, 1876, the Indians annihilated the five troops of the Seventh which Custer led into battle and inflicted heavy casualties upon the other six troops before they were rescued by Terry the next day.

Controversy Over Custer.
For more than 60 years a con-

troversy has raged over this battle. Critics of Custer assert that he alone was responsible for the tragedy. They say that he was hungry for a victory which would regain for him some of the prestige he had lost in the Belknap affair and that he was determined to grab all the glory of such a victory for himself. So, they assert, he deliberately destroyed both the letter and the spirit of Terry's explicit orders and by bringing on a battle 24 hours too soon he not only brought disaster upon himself but he broke up a plan which would have insured defeat of the Indians.

Custer-defenders tell another story. They admit his desire for a victory but they deny that he disobeyed Terry's instructions for they read in them an interpretation which gave him considerable latitude of action and fully justify his departure from the letter of those much-debated orders.

In the heat of their dispute, they overlook an incident which may furnish a clue to one of the forces that motivated him. This incident suggests that, despite the unhappy results of his previous ventures into politics, he was contemplating still another and that his ultimate goal was Washington, D. C., and the White House!

Accompanying Custer on this expedition was a party of Arikara or Ree, Indian scouts, many of whom, including a fierce warrior named Bloody Knife, had taken part in Custer's exploration of the Black Hills two years earlier. Before Terry's army left Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota territory, Custer held a council with the Arikara scouts.

Years later Red Star, one of the Arikara scouts, during an interview with O. G. Libby of the North Dakota Historical society, recalling the council, disclosed that Custer told the Arikaras "he had been to Washington and he had been informed that this would be his last campaign in the West among the Indians. He said that no matter how small a victory he could win, even though it was against only five tents of the Dakotas (Sioux) it would make him President, Great Father, and he must turn back as soon as he was victorious. In case of victory, he would take Bloody Knife back with him to Washington."

Later, during the march into the Indian country, Custer again talked with his Indian scouts. At that time, according to Red Star:

He said he had made up his mind to go on this expedition to fight. He said he had been to Washington and had been given instructions to follow the Dakotas. Now that he was on the war-path, if he had a victory, he said, "When we return, I will go back to Washington and on my trip to Washington I shall take my brother, Bloody Knife, with me. I shall have a fine house built for him, and those of you present will be the ones I will go back to look after the work that will be placed in charge of Bloody Knife. You will have positions under him to help in what he is to do and you can, when you wish to speak with me or send me word, gather at Bloody Knife's house and decide what the message will be. Then he will send it to me. He will be given the whole tribe of Arikaras to be head of. I will have papers made out for each of you here and you will have plenty to eat for all time to come, and you and your children.

In saying such things, was Custer merely "talking big" (army officers who knew him well say that he was given to doing that) in order to impress his Indian scouts and, by making such promises, did he hope to hold them steadfast if they should show an inclination to desert him at a critical time in the coming campaign? Or was he truly "showing his heart" to trusted Indian friends who would not likely betray his confidence.

There is, of course, no way of knowing which of these two possibilities is the more believable. But they suggest other interesting speculations.

More than once the American people had elected a military hero President. They had sent "Old Hickory" Jackson, "Old Tippecanoe" Harrison and "Old Rough and Ready" Taylor to the White House. Why shouldn't they send "Old Curley" Custer, the conqueror of the Sioux, there—if he should win a great victory over the Indians?

Were such thoughts as these in the mind of George Armstrong Custer when he told his Arikara scouts that he was going to be their "Great Father"? Was he planning, in the event of victory, to enter the political arena once more and prove that he could win there as well as on the field of battle?

Those questions must remain forever unanswered. The lips of the only man who could have answered them were sealed by death on a barren hillside in Montana one hot Sunday in June of the year 1876.

College Girl Fashions Stress Contrasting, Versatile 'Tops'

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



FASHION is playing a game. It's contrast "tops." Here's how. You buy one or two or more smart skirts. Follow this up with a wardrobe of contrasting "tops" and you win a clothes collection that will carry you through with a smashing style record as you travel in campus environs and at all the football games you have dated in advance on your fall program.

For that lasting "first impression" at college you will go down in history vain gloriously as a smart dresser if you wear a costume as pictured to the left in the group illustrated. Evelyn Allen designs this versatile jacket dress with a gay check-printed velveteen top contrasting a youthful flaring skirt. Note the shirred pockets and bishop sleeves. If you take the jacket off and wear your skirt with your new sweaters and blouses, you will be voted among the best dressed of all campus trotters.

Centered in the group is another contrast-top costume by the same designer. This softly tailored frock of gay plaid with its interesting bell sleeve and its contrasting skirt will put you at the head of your class so far as fashion is concerned, and it will keep you there. A two-piece frock such as this is liable to prove the talk of town for months to come. Fashion is playing up with great success the idea of the one-piece dress that looks like a two-piece. The smart dress to the right in the picture is an apt demonstration. It merited spontaneous applause recently at the National Wash Apparel style reveal in Chicago. It is of the popular shirtwaist persuasion. The checked blouse top, seamed to the skirt, has a yoke front and back. Acorn buttons are placed down the front opening and on the pockets of the monotone skirt. Here is an ideal dress for go-to-school wear and it will prove a favorite standby for informal dating. You can get this very charming dress in handsome navy or sparkling wine.

Nice thing about this contrast-top vogue is that it goes easy on the clothes budget. You can collect a whole bevy of "tops" without spending a fortune, and with judicious interchanging you can dress up or down to any occasion. One of the neatest tricks brought out in way of contrast tops is the new waist-depth pinafore top that you slip jumper-fashion over a simple blouse. It has wide shoulder straps that are brought down to the back where they tie at the waist in a pert bow exactly as a little girl's pinafore ties.

You can buy these little pinafore tops made of plaid taffeta at most stores. For the school-going girl who must keep a date they are a real "find." Slip it in your schoolbag or brief case so you can dash it on in a jiffy and look dressed up quick as a flash of lightning. You will also be wanting one of the new gay suede vests. With your jacket suit they are "tops" in fashion. Wear it with the new velveteen suit, add a matching suede hat, and it will surely make a "hit" in any grandstand spectator group.

And here is a style hint that any girl of fashion aspirations cannot afford to let go unheeded. It's in regard to the clever new blouses that are made like shirts. They are made of all sorts of fabrics, and are cut like boys' and men's shirts. Gabardine is the safest choice for active sports wear, although washable broadcloth is a close second.

You can get these shirts in wool, tailored as manlike as your heart desires. The idea is to choose a wool in color to blend or match your tweed suit, or, if you prefer, play up a contrast. You will surely be wanting a white jersey shirt. A wool homespun also will not come amiss, for the new homespuns are delightfully sheer. They are "comfy" on very first cool days and ever so good-looking. Sheer wool with drawn threadwork is just beginning to be shown in the shirt and blouse sections.

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Smart Black Felt



Here you see a smart fall felt hat in all its glory. Huge cartwheels of this type are worn with chic afternoon tailcoats as well as with dress-up frocks and they are especially good-looking with the new all-black dressmaker coats. No matter how small hats you may be acquiring, your fall headgear wardrobe simply must include a wide-brimmed black felt. Cartwheel types show here vie with the pompadour-flare types that you wear as far back on the head as possible to reveal and give accent to the new off-forehead hair-do.

Novelty Jewelry Is Made of 'Anything'

The fashion for gold accents on black costumes persists. The jewelry wrought in gold this season is exquisitely detailed. The emphasis is on good taste rather than bizarre effects.

Novelty jewelry is fashioned of any and every medium that happens to come to hand. Some of the smartest jewelry items in the novelty class have apparently "gone nuts." They are made of actual nuts linked together in ingenious ways. The now-so-popular jewelry of carved wood tones beautifully to the new costumes in autumn colorings. Cork and felt are also new media used in the jewelry realm.

Mannish Influence In New Fashions

And now what! It's men's coats for women. For fashion declares that suits must take on a mannish look and the edict has been accepted as literally by members of the younger smart set. Debutantes and sub-debs, college girls and career girls are actually going into men's stores to purchase socks and blouse shirts, and to look up details as to man-tailored coats, so as to give orders to their tailor to borrow ideas from their brothers' and father's tweed suits.



WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

By LEMUEL F. PARTON
(Consolidated Features—WNU Service.)

NEW YORK.—The urgency of the times is such that perhaps this country needs a good alchemist more than a good five-cent cigar. Possibly we have one in Dr. Samuel Colville Lind, who offers what appears to this department to be the first soundly conservative sanction for the possible availability of atomic power—power in our time.

At the Detroit meeting of the American Chemical society, starting its national defense inventory of chemical skills and resources, Dr. Lind reports a startling advance toward the power riches of the metal uranium 235. Hit a few atoms of U-235 with 50 electron volts and you draw off 200,000,000 electron volts. It looks like a power millennium, which this country could use just now. Dr. Lind says there is plenty of uranium and that the seizure of its power is a practical possibility, not nullified by high costs of the process. Cutting the power atom out of the herd of slightly different atoms is the one great remaining obstacle.

Dr. Lind has been an ace atom-nucleus bomber for many years. His field of radioactivity has been a zone of wizardry in chemistry and he has turned in much basic research, including his ionization theory of the chemical effect of radium rays. He has written extensively on subjects in his field. From his native McMinnville, Tenn., where he was born in 1879, he went to Washington and Lee university and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with an education chaser at the University of Leipzig and later at the University of Michigan, served as chief chemist of the U. S. bureau of mines and is now dean of the institute of technology of the University of Minnesota.

MILLIONS by the hundreds are just about an irresistible target, and perhaps Sunday supplement writers can be forgiven for trying occasionally to make a **Keeping English** playground of Marshall Field, although in his heyday his chief sins have been no more than an understandable interest in hunting and horses, and dogs, mainly retrievers.

Now, however, even these trot into the background as he gears up the National Child Refugee committee of which he is chairman. His job is to keep well oiled the wheels that roll English children by the thousands out of the reach of Nazi dive bombers. It must keep him whacking away long after the latest fox has taken cover.

Just the same the supplementers were right on one point. He really has hundreds of millions. They pour down from the original Marshall Fields of Chicago. In his middle forties now, Chairman Field is sturdily handsome, with a grayish pompadour and a big, fish, sharp nose. He dresses well, as he was taught at Eton and Cambridge where he got his schooling, though conservatively. His pants have no cuffs at all.

THREE Americans talk up the war with King George and one is Major General Emmons of the United States air corps. He is one of the youngest officers picked by Roosevelt to Why of 'Delos' while back to give the country's several military arms extra socko. Fifty-two years old, he has been in the army since 1909; with the infantry until 1916, when he was switched to the signal corps. That made him a flier because in those dark and stumbling days the signal corps was all the flying service the United States had.

At birth his parents named him "Delos." Mostly, the Deloses lack adequate explanation of their parents' curious preference, and the general belongs to this forever-puzzled fry.

In full his name is Delos Carleton Emmons. In many given names there is little sense indeed, but in "Delos" there can be no rhyme or reason. This commentator knows one "Delos" who explains feebly that his given name stems from a French cook in a Wisconsin lumber camp where his father was foreman. No more! Not even that he flipped a noble flapjack. The general has one daughter; she undoubtedly has told him he is a man who never learns. Because, guess what he named her. Delostel!

Things to do



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A General Quiz

The Questions

1. What are the four fundamentals of combustion?
2. Is "insignia" a singular or plural noun?
3. Who stole Helen — Ulysses, Paris, or Achilles—and thereby brought about the Trojan war?
4. Who said: "Cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education"?
5. Can anyone who dies on duty in U. S. military or naval service or has been honorably discharged be buried at Arlington?
6. What is the origin of the word "alimony"?

The Answers

1. The four fundamentals of combustion are mixture, air, time and temperature.
2. Plural. The singular form is insignia.
3. Paris.
4. Mark Twain (Pudd'nhead Wilson's calendar).
5. Yes.
6. The word comes from the Latin "alimonia," which means sustenance or nourishment.

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