The Chatham Record

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1891.

H. A. LONDON, Editor.

THE PUBLIC utterances of public men are proper subjects for comment and publication in the Press. Therefore the Record will now refer to some of the public utterances of ex-Lieutenant L. L. Polk, which he is reported as having made recently in his speeches in Kansas, where he has been canvassing in the interests of the proposed third party, just as his ally, Jerry Simpson, was recently canvassing in this State for the same purpose.

Some of these reported utterances of Lieut. Polk are so strange and startling that at first we could not believe them true and would not publish them. He was reported as having said in his Kansas speeches that he had been forced into the Confederate (or as he called it "the rebel") army, and that while there indirectly did what he could for the Union. Of course this was said with the hope of placating and pleasing the Kansas soldiers, but it seems to have had a contrary effect and to have disgusted them, as will be seen from the following dispatch to the Atlanta *Constitution*, dated Topeka Kansas, Sept. 19th:

The statement made by Col Polk at the Clay Centre and Holton Alliance meetings, regarding his service in the Confederate army, was of such a remarkable character that much talk has been occasioned among ex-Union soldiers.

Edward Gregory, an enthusiastic Grand Army man, said today to the *Constitution* reporter who questioned us to the accuracy of the utterance attributed to President Polk in the press reports:

"I was at the Clay Centre meeting and heard the man who seemed to me anxious to betray his own comrades. When he said he accepted a position in the Confederate army to make less the sufferings of his comrades who had been forced to bear arms, I became disgusted and said I was already angry over the statement that he had been forced to bear arms against his country after having upheld the Union. The manner of catching votes was not to my mind, nor do I think Kansas generally approves of it. Kansas soldiers are radical, but they respect the men who were honorable open enemies, contending for what they believed to be their duty. Those words of his were so impressed on my mind that I can never forget them.

C. D. Eggleston, who came back to this city tonight, when asked for the report of Polk's remarks concerning his Confederate record said:

"I went up to Bolton to prepare to attend the Alliance meeting. When Polk commenced on his war record, I was expecting an explanation of the charges made against him by certain Northern papers. To my surprise, he launched into a statement regarding the fact he was compelled to enter the rebel army after having been a strong Union man. He used the word 'force' which was received with applause. When he asserted that he held a commission in that army to operate opposite cause, meaning in favor of the Union army, there was a profound silence, as though of disapproval. He branded himself a traitor to the cause whose uniform he wore and I, wearing a Grand Army button, could not, even in a political campaign, give such a statement my endorsement, although I have been voting the Alliance ticket, having formerly been a Democrat, which I am once again to remain."

In order to find out if there was any truth in, or foundation for the above dispatch we inclosed it in a letter to Mr. W. J. A. Montgomery, the editor of the *Critic*, a paper published at Clay Centre, Kansas, asking him to write the Record whether or not Lieut. Polk had been correctly reported. We would not publish it at first, because we hoped that it was not true and was a slander on an ex-Confederate officer, and so wrote for information to Mr. Montgomery, because he is a prominent democratic editor in Kansas whom we met at St. Paul, at the recent National Editorial Convention, and whose statement could be implicitly believed. The following is his letter in answer:

"CLAY CENTRE, Kansas,
Sept. 22, 1891.

Dear Sir:—Yours of the 19th inst. at hand and contents fully noted. Col. L. L. Polk stated at the Alliance gathering here that he was a Union man and opposed Secession to the very last and that he was *compelled to enter the rebel army against his wishes*. That he was among the last 15 or 20 of the 267 [I do not pretend to give exact figures] who voted for him for the Legislature, to join the rebel army. That he went in because his State did. He stated that he was only a third Lieutenant in rank. I did not hear him say that he went into the army to be able to help indirectly the opposite side or those who were forced into the rebel army, but that idea was conveyed to a number who did hear him. He left a bad impression on all his audience for several reasons and impressed many as being insincere. He stated that the democrats were raising the false cry of a nigger domination to scare the whites into support of the democratic ticket.

Respectfully,
W. J. A. MONTGOMERY."

So that it appears that, away out yonder among the old Union soldiers of Kansas, Lieut. Polk was ashamed of having been a Confederate soldier and publicly apologized by declaring that he was compelled to enter the "rebel" army against his wishes.

Now, let us examine the official records and see if his statement is true. By reference to the official Roster of N. C. Troops, published by authority of our State Legislature, it will be seen that L. L. Polk of Anson county, *volunteered early in the war*, and enlisted as a private in Co K, 26th N. C. regiment on the 16th of May 1861 was promoted to sergeant-major of that regiment in June, 1862, and in February, 1863, was promoted to third lieutenant of Co I 33rd N. C. regiment, which position he resigned in September, 1863, upon his election to the legislature. The record of that legislature does not show that he introduced or advocated any measure looking to terminate the war or suspend hostilities. Several years after the war, at the invitation of the Ladies Confederate Memorial Association of Raleigh, he delivered the annual memorial address in that city in memory of the Confederate soldiers, and in that those who had never heard him say that he had been "compelled to enter the rebel army against his wishes."

Comment is unnecessary!

[illegible] Watterson's Address.

[illegible] entered upon the [illegible] address of welcome and express the pleasant sensation of being once [illegible] Old North State. [illegible] Carolina has many [illegible] Statesmen [illegible] Southern [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]