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A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Theodore Rose Cogswell, (1918–1987), was an American science fiction author. He wrote nearly 40 science fiction stories, many in a lighthearted vein, and was co-author of the *Star Trek* novel, *Spock, Messiah!* (with Charles A. Spano, Jr.)

Cogswell also edited the long-running “fanzine for pros,” *Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies*, a collection of which was published in 1993. In this, writers and editors discussed their and each other’s works.

During the Spanish Civil War, he served as an ambulance driver on the Republican side in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

It was voted by the Science Fiction Writers of America as one of the finest novellas prior to the introduction of the Nebula Awards in 1965 and included in their anthology, *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume Two*.

Wildside Press will be reprinting all of Theodore Cogswell’s works in 2014-2015. *The Spectre General* is the first in the series.
“Sergeant Dixon!”

Kurt stiffened. He knew that voice. Dropping the handles of the wooden plow, he gave a quick “rest” to the private and a polite “by your leave, sir” to the lieutenant who were yoked together in double harness. They both sank gratefully to the ground as Kurt advanced to meet the approaching officer.

Marcus Harris, the commander of the 427th Light Maintenance Battalion of the Imperial Space Marines, was an imposing figure. The three silver eagle feathers of a full colonel rose proudly from his war bonnet, and the flaming-comet insignia of the Space Marines painted on his chest stood out starkly against his sun-blackened, leathery skin. As Kurt snapped to attention before him and saluted, the colonel surveyed the freshly turned earth with an experienced eye.

“You plow a straight furrow, soldier!” His voice was hard and metallic, but it seemed to Kurt that there was a concealed glimmer of approval in those flinty eyes. Dixon flushed with pleasure and drew back his broad shoulders a little further.

The commander’s eyes flicked down to the battle-ax that rested snugly in its leather holster at Kurt’s side. “You keep a clean side-arm, too.”

Kurt uttered a silent prayer of thanksgiving that he had worked over his weapon before reveille that morning. Now its redwood handle had a satin gloss and its black obsidian head held the sheen of well-polished glass.

“In fact,” said Colonel Harris, “you’d be officer material if . . .” His voice trailed off.

“If what?” asked Kurt eagerly.

“If,” said the colonel with a note of paternal fondness in his voice that sent chills dancing down Kurt’s spine, “you weren’t the most