

WAR STORIES.

Lee's Sagacity Saved Nation From Guerrilla Warfare.

Charles Francis Adams, in The Sun, N. Y.

The following article is an extract from a paper read by Mr. Adams before the American Antiquarian Society. It sheds entirely new light on the character of Robert E. Lee as the savior of his country, and is of vast historical value:

The present seems to me a sufficiently proper occasion, and this a good place, to call attention to a matter not otherwise than germane to the purpose of this society. Historical in its character, it conveys a lesson of grave import. One of the most unhappy, and, to those concerned in it, disastrous wars of the century is that now in South Africa dragging itself out to a conclusion apparently still remote; and, in every way, unsatisfactory. There is a good reason to believe that the conflict was unnecessary in its inception; that by judicious action, it might have long since have been brought to a close; and, finally, that it is now continued simply because the parties to it cannot be brought together to discuss and arrive at a sensible basis of adjustment—a basis from which both are in reality ready to agree.

My purpose, however, is to draw attention to the hair-breadth escape we ourselves had from a similar experience now thirty-six years ago, and to assign to whom it belongs the credit of that escape. In one word, in the strong light of passing events I think it now opportune to set forth the debt of gratitude this reunited country of ours—union and confederate, north and south—owes to Robert E. Lee, of Virginia. Most of those here—remember the state of affairs which existed in the United States, especially in what was then known as the Confederate States, or the rebellious portion of the United States, in April, 1865. Such as are not yet as mature as that memory implies, have read and heard thereof. It was in every respect almost the identical state of affairs which existed in South Africa at the time of the capture of Pretoria by General Roberts in June a year ago. On the 2nd of April, 1865, the confederate commander found himself compelled to evacuate his lines between Richmond and Petersburg, and our forces at last entered the Confederate capital. Four days later the army of northern Virginia was practically surrounded and overtures looking to capitulation passed between General Grant and General Lee. On the famous Sunday preceding Jefferson Davis, hastily called from the church service he was attending, left Richmond on his way to Danville.

It is unnecessary for me even to refer to the series of events which followed the abandonment of Richmond and preceded the surrender at Appomattox. It is sufficient to say that the capitulation of the army of northern Virginia had become inevitable. Not the less for that, the course thereafter to be pursued as concerned further resistance on the part of the Confederacy was still to be decided. It is well known that, in the face of disaster, Jefferson Davis had not for an instant given up the thought of continuing the struggle. To do so was certainly practicable. Foreign opinion, for instance, on this point was settled; it was assumed as a certainty of the future that the conquest of the Confederacy was impossible. The English journals had always maintained, and still did maintain, that the defeat of Lee in the field, or even the surrender of all the Confederate armies would be but the close of one phase of the war and the opening of another phase—the final phase being a long, fruitless effort to subdue a united people in a region so vast that it would be impossible to penetrate every portion of it much less hold it in subjection. As an historical fact, the scales on the 9th of April, 1865, hung wavering in the balance; a mere turn of the hand would decide which way they were to incline. Thus, on the morning of that momentous day, it was an absolutely open question, an even chance, whether the course which was actually pursued should be pursued, or whether the leaders of the Confederacy would adopt the policy which President Kruger and Generals Botha and DeWet have in South Africa more recently adopted, and are now following.

The decision rested in the hands of one man—the commander of the army of northern Virginia. Fairly reliable and very graphic accounts of what took place at General Lee's headquarters in the early morning hours of that day have either appeared in print or been told in conversation, and to two of these accounts I propose to call attention. Apparently the second of these interviews described followed close on the first, not more than

a couple of hours intervening between them. Of the first, I find this account in a book recently published by John Sargent Wise, entitled "The End of an Era." John Sargent Wise is the son of Henry A. Wise, once prominent in our national politics.

Governor of Virginia in the latter "fifties," he was subsequently a brigadier general in the Confederate service. Though in 1865 but a youth of 19, John S. Wise was a hot Confederate, and had already been wounded in battle. At the time now in question he chanced to have been sent by Jefferson Davis, then on his way from Richmond to Danville, with despatches to Lee; and, while seeking Lee's headquarters, he came, in the early morning of April 9, across his father, Governor and General Wise, in bivouac with his brigade. The father was then nearly 60 years of age, but the son found him lying on the ground asleep among his men. A typical Southern "fire-eater" of the extreme type, Henry A. Wise was an out and out Secessionist and Confederate. Aroused by his son from his uneasy slumber, almost the first wish he expressed was to see General Lee, and he inquired impetuously of his whereabouts. The son knew where the Confederate headquarters were, and the two started together to go to them. John S. Wise has described vividly the aspect of affairs as they passed along. "The roads and fields were filled with stragglers. They moved looking behind them, as if they expected to be attacked and harried by a pursuing foe. Demoralization, panic, abandonment of all hope appeared on every hand. Wagons were rolling along without any order or system. Caissons and limber chests, without commanding officers, seemed to be floating aimlessly upon a tide of disorganization. Rising to his full height, casting a glance around him like that of an eagle, and sweeping the horizon with his long arm and bony forefinger, my father exclaimed: 'This is the end.' It is impossible to convey an idea of the agony and the bitterness of his words and gestures." Then follows a description of the interview which ensued:

"We found General Lee on the rear portion of the house that I have mentioned. He had washed his face in a tin basin and stood drying his beard with a coarse towel as we approached. 'General Lee,' exclaimed my father, 'my poor, brave men are lying on yonder hill more dead than alive. For more than a week they have been fighting day and night without food, and, by God, sir, they shall not move another step until somebody gives them something to eat.'

"Come in, general," said General Lee, soothingly. 'They deserve something to eat, and shall have it; and meanwhile you shall share my breakfast.' He disarmed everything like defiance by his frankness.

"It was but a few moments, however, before my father launched forth in a fresh denunciation of the conduct of General Bushrod Johnson in the engagement of the 6th. I am satisfied that General Lee felt as he did; but, assuming an air of mook severity, he said, 'General, are you aware that you are liable to court martial and execution for insubordination and disrespect toward your commanding officer?'

"My father looked at him with lifted eyebrow and flashing eyes and exclaimed: 'Shot! You can't afford to shoot the men who fight for cursing those who ran away. Shot! I wish you would shoot me. If you don't some Yankee probably will within the next twenty-four hours.'

sort, their devotion for you and faith in you have been the only things which have held this army together. If you demand the sacrifice, there are still left thousands of us who will die for you. You know the game is desperate beyond redemption and that, if you so announce, no man or government or people will gainsay your word. That is why I repeat that the blood of any man killed hereafter be upon your head."

"General Lee stood for some time at an open window, looking out at the through now surging upon the roads and in the fields, and made no response.

"It will be remembered that John Sargent Wise was individually present at this conversation, a youth of 19. I have a little respect as any one well can have for the recollection of thirty years since as a basis of history. Nevertheless, it would seem quite out of the question that a youth of only 19 could have been present at such a scene as is here described, and that the words which then passed, and the incidents which occurred, should not have been indelibly imprinted upon his memory. I am disposed, therefore, to consider this reliable historical material.

"Meanwhile, it so chanced that I am able to supplement it by similar, as yet unpublished, testimony from another quarter. Some years ago I was closely associated with General E. P. Alexander, who had been chief of artillery in Longstreet's famous corps, and who, in April, 1865, was, if my recollection is correct, chief of artillery of the army of northern Virginia. It was General Alexander who, in 1863, fought with General Hunt, of the army of the Potomac, the famous artillery duel which preceded on the 2nd of July the memorable charge of Pickett's division at Gettysburg. In the course of many conversations with General Alexander, whose memory, singularly accurate as well as tenacious, was also supported by memoranda taken at the time, he more than once gave me an account, of which I retain the freshest possible recollection, of an interview which followed close upon that with General Wise at General Lee's headquarters. General Wise evidently saw Lee at an early hour on April 9. That same morning General Alexander had occasion to report to Lee. He knew that the army of northern Virginia was in a deplorable situation. Moreover, as he well knew, the limber-chests were running low; his arm of the service was in no condition to go into another engagement. Yet the idea of an abandonment of the cause had never occurred to him as among the probabilities. All night he had lain awake, thinking as to what was next to be done.

"Finally he had come to the conclusion that there was but one course to pursue. The army of northern Virginia, while nominally capitulating, must in reality disperse, and those composing it should be instructed, whether individually or as part of detachments, to get to his own State in the most direct way and shortest possible time, and report to the governor thereof, with a view to a further and continuous resistance.

"Thus, exactly what is now taking place in South Africa was to take place in the Confederacy. General Alexander told me that, as he passed his batteries on his way to headquarters, the men called out to him that there were still some rounds remaining in the caissons, and that they were ready to renew the fight. Riding rapidly to his destination, General Alexander found Lee seated on the trunk of a fallen tree before a dying campfire. He was dressed in uniform. Full of the idea which dominated his mind, Alexander said that he sprang

from his horse, and, advancing to Lee, knelt down beside him, leaning against the log on which he was seated, and began almost at once to propound his plan, for it seemed to him the only plan worthy of consideration. As he went on General Lee, looking steadily into the fire with an abstracted air, listened patiently. Alexander said his full say. A brief pause ensued, which Lee finally broke in somewhat these words: 'No! General Alexander, that will not do. You must remember that we are a Christian people. We have fought this fight as long and as well as we know how. We have been defeated. For us as a Christian people there is now but one course to pursue. We must accept the situation; these men must go home and plant a crop, and we must proceed to build up our country on a new basis. We cannot have recourse to the methods you suggest.' I remember being deeply impressed with Alexander's comment, as he repeated these words of Lee. They had evidently burned themselves into his memory. He said: 'I had nothing more to say. I felt that the man had soared away up above me—he dominated me completely. I rose from beside him; silently mounted my horse, rode back to my command, and waited for the order to surrender.'

"Then and there Lee decided its course for the Confederacy. And I take it there is not one solitary man in the United States, North or South, who does not feel that he decided right."

How the Boys Got Fresh Meat in Camp.

Talk about close calls, I will endeavor to tell of one and of a display of generalship in winter quarters at Fredericksburg, Va. Fresh meat was very scarce, and we were very anxious to procure some; so we held a council of war in our tent to devise some means by which we might be able to have the article above named. The only way we could devise was to go after it. So two of the men, Billie and Perry, ventured out one night, and after a long journey in the country returned late in the night with a tub of very fine beef, which was placed in the tent. Arising next morning with rabid appetites, as nothing but soldiers can have, we prepared ourselves for a feast.

But look! What is the matter in camp? We see a provost guard passing through the different streets of our camp, led by an old citizen. I gave the alarm. Up, boys! No time to lose. What shall we do with this tub of beef? They are advancing upon us. Here they come, searching every tent. Steady boys; keep cool! Thetford gives orders; each man obeys. Steady, men, they are still advancing. Perry, take your position on outside of tent. Thetford and Mac, take your positions at the tub of meat. Orderly, you take your position at the entrance of the tent. Keep cool, which was not hard to do, as there was plenty of snow on the ground; but I didn't feel the cold much. Just at this time they are advancing down one street, first one side, then on the other side, entering every tent. Attention, men! Every man to his place. Now, orderly, when they pass by the rear of the tent raise your

hand. Thetford and Mac, pass the tub through the gable to Perry on the outside. They pass the given point; the hand is raised; the tub is passed through to the outside.

"Halt!" The salute is given. "Have orders to search your tent." "For what?" "Fresh meat."

March in; beds turned up, straw turned over; bayonets jab the ground. "No meat in this tent."

Old Citizen: "Glad to know that we did not find any meat in your tent. Lost a very fine beef last night. Shame, shame, that some soldiers will steal!"

"Shoulder arms! Forward march!" Presto change—the meat is passed back into the tent as they depart.

I have been scared many times before and since, but for a short time I certainly was anxious and scared both at the same time. I have been through many trying times, have had many narrow escapes since the beef scrape, but do not think I ever suffered more for the length of time it lasted. My honor was at stake, but I must say that after my suspense had passed and I had suppressed my conscience I certainly did enjoy the beefsteak.

R. P. SCHOPPERT,
O. S. Co. B. 11th Ala. Regt.
A World Power.

"I tell you, ain't none o'th' nations a-join' t' tackle us," shouted the man with the faded hair, gesticulating wildly to the assembled crowd.

"We're a world power now, an' we've got 'em all skeered. Why, we've got a big navy, th' best army in th' world, an' we've got more money than we can haul in a hay wagon. We're so almighty big an' rich that we kin—"

"Yes, we've got all them things," interrupted a woman who had slipped into the crowd and grasped the orator by the arm. "We're a world power all right; but we ain't got enough wood sawed to boil Squite Richman's washin', an' if we don't git it right away a portion o' this great nation ain't goin' t' git no dinner. Now you mosey off home an' let Europe tremble all she wants to."

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They just know that DEAN & RATLIFF'S prices are as low as the lowest, and the quality of the Goods are above suspicion.

They believe that, no matter how busy DEAN & RATLIFF may get, they will handle their orders just as though it was the only one they ever had. That's what makes DEAN & RATLIFF the Caesar of all the Russians in trade circles, and the high-cock-a-lorem of the bargain ranch.

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