

Greeley

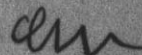
Asked about Greeley at the start, when and why he happened to go ^{back} to him. Says Greeley was busy with his book, needed a private secretary through the winter of '64 and '65 and asked him. Got very little out of him except that he liked Greeley. Give an amusing description of the way he started for Washington once on receiving a telegram from Lincoln to come down. Pulled on his boots - they were boots with straps - but failed to pull his trouser legs over them - collar of his overcoat turned in. Seems to have been a good deal of a wag in his correspondence - tells of writing to an Iowa man who had asked Greeley to tell him what was the best variety of pigs, that it depended on what he wanted them for. If it was to run on the sidewalks, there was one kind necessary; if it was to sing in a choir, it was another, and that a dead pig was the best for eating. He actually wrote and sent this letter, and years afterwards, going to the town in Iowa to lecture, his host there showed it to him framed under glass and said in all seriousness that the family was never able to make head of tail to it, he supposed that was because Greeley wrote so badly. Wing claims that his own handwriting was as illegible as that of Greeley's, they could not be read. He characterizes Greeley as a simple hearted man whom he loved.

Goes back to when he was a young man. I recall Litchfield and his editorial on Lincoln's death. He says, "As a young man I did not like Lincoln. My mother was a Democrat so I was naturally a democrat. She had been a

Democrat so I was naturally a democrat. She had been a teacher in Southern families and had seen the best of slavery, but Lincoln's call for 75,000 converted me. I was in Litchfield at the Worcester House, and I was thinking of Lincoln so hard that I went to bed with my hat on. I read

the call over several times. I saw the manhood of the man. He didn't try to stir people, he tried to make them think. I could not enlist then for I was in debt - tied up with a Vermont man in a slate yard in South Norwalk. My partner went to war and that broke up the firm."

Goes back again to his first interview with Lincoln. Says that night, after he left Lincoln, he went around to the National Hotel where he occupied a room. He says "I looked in the glass to see the place where he had kissed me. I was wakened up at daybreak by newspapers saying there was news from Grant. I knew then that my story had leaked. I went at once to the Tribune office, which was upstairs. The place was crowded. Sam Wilkinson I found standing on a table and telling the crowd of representatives and senators and great men that it was a fake, that nobody had received word from the army, that Wing had not come to Washington. As I crowded through somebody called out, 'There's Wing now.' So somebody got me up on the table. I told the crowd it was true. Then they began to ask questions. When I told them that Stanton had ordered that I be hung as a spy, one of the representatives passed over \$50 to be put in my hat, before I got through the hat was full of money. The next thing Secretary Welles gave a reception. I had not had two

thing Secretary Welles gave a reception. I had not had two hours' sleep since Thursday (look up the dates). — 

„Saturday afternoon Wilkinson and I went over to talk with Lincoln and he asked me what I was going to do. It was then I told him I was going after Jess. I did the next morning, he giving me an engine to go down with. When I got back Sunday night we had another talk and that was the time it was agreed that I should be his "personal handy boy." What he

wanted was somebody who had carried a musket, to bring him news of the way the soldiers were feeling.

Scrap-Book

Mrs. Wing calls my attention to a personal scrap-book. Wing is loath to let me have it because, he says, it looks like blowing his own horn. He didn't want me to see the personal things in it, "They are too silly". Here he is talking about the verses he has written and the pictures he has drawn for his grandchildren on their birthdays, etc. - some of them very cunning.

The book begins with notices from the press of his bringing the news from Grant. He has written at the head of this "Taffy." The most important of these is a dispatch from Washington, dated Monday, May 9, published in the Tribune of May 10, which says: "The Tribune's messenger, who brought to the Government not only, but to the country, the first news of the recent great battle, was Henry E. Wing of Connecticut. He footed half of the distance in and was frequently fired on by guerrillas. He was a totally used up pedestrian when he reached the Tribune Bureau in this city - used up in everything but pluck."

In a little sketch of Wing from the Brooklyn Times - no date - evidently from information given by Wing, says he enlisted in the 27th Connecticut, belonged to the Color Guard, was wounded in the charge against on Marie's Heights at Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862.

Heights at Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862.

He speaks of his bringing messages from Grant in the summer of 1864, spending a day working his way through Confederate camps and traps. On arriving safely inside the Union lines Mr. Wing telegraphed to assistant Secretary of War Dana, asking permission to send a dispatch to his paper. The reply came back that Secretary Stanton would like to hear the

news from the front. Mr. Wing refused to grant this request until he had sent his press notice and was promptly placed under arrest. It was Friday night, the wires between the North and Washington would be closed at midnight and as no Sunday paper was published his chance for a beat would be spoiled, as there would, in all likelihood, be other correspondents through the lines before the Monday's papers were issued. Then came the message that President Lincoln would like to have the news from Grant. Mr. Wing replied that he would be glad to give the information desired provided he was allowed to send at first one hundred words to the Tribune. These terms were agreed to by the President. An engine quickly took the correspondent to Washington.

I find the story has been told in the newspapers at various times, also that his story of Lincoln's teaching that the signal is in a letter from Wing published in the Century for January, 1908. In connection with this see Bates' chapter on the Wilderness.

In talking of his adventure at this time Wing said to me in this interview more than once in later years he had wakened up in the night and thought the story was not true -

wakened up in the night and thought the story was not true - had to get out his papers to reassure himself.

The Tribune people were enormously proud of Wing's exploit, and Homer Byington sent Mrs. Wing a letter enclosing \$100 from the Tribune people as a "slight token of appreciation for Mr. Wing's successful efforts to serve them."

A letter from Cyrus Northrup to Wing's father, Ebenezer Wing, written December 26, 1862, condoles with them over his wound's and congratulates them on his almost miraculous escape. Northrup says the wounds he bears and will bear to his grave will be proud mementos of duty bravely performed, and

*Subscribed
July 3, 1864
Wing*

1. 125 Wm

5

"I would give more for them than the largest practice of the best lawyer in the state." He enclosed a letter he had received from Henry. It would be interesting to know how the Reverend Ebenezer took this!

Mr. Wing tells me his father and he differed radically at the start of the war. I take it from what he says that they had never been on extra good terms. The old man was a dictator, I imagine, and the boy a boy wilful. Just after the outbreak of the war Henry was invited to make a speech at Goshen, his birthplace, where the family home was. He talked eloquently, as he thought, on its being a war to save the Union and not to liberate the slaves. When he was through his father, an ardent Abolitionist, rushed to the platform and denounced him bitterly. Henry's mother turned

platform and denounced him bitterly. Henry's mother turned to him and said, "There is a train from Wolcottville for South Norwalk in about an hour. You better take it." He ~~chuckled~~ as he said, "I took it. And I never got the \$20 they promised me for my speech."

In one of the clippings this story is told. It describes Wing as ~~as~~ riding to the meeting in a chariot drawn by four white horses, and says the oration was followed by an outdoor banquet. The first of the after dinner speakers was Ebeneazar Wing. When he arose he shouted across the table, "Who would have thought that Ebeneazar Wing would ever come to this disgrace, to be compelled to listen to such a brutal sentiments from the miscreant bearing his name."

The scrap-book contains various letters from the army published in the Hartford Paladium - fragments of his correspondence from the N. Y. Tribune. None of these things seem to servemy purpose.

Illustration

If there should be need of illustration the scrap book contains a cut of Wing at 25 years, probably an amro-type. Ask them about this. Also his card as a Tribune Correspondent in the Army of the Potomac, together with two passes which might be reproduced. .

wrote an editorial. One of them attracted Greeley's attention, and he wrote to Bromley about it. Mrs. Bromley wrote back and told him I wrote it, and then he asked me to go down to New York and go on the Tribune staff.

"That was in the fall of 1863. He sent me to Washington. Sam (?) Wilkinson was the head of the Tribune office in Washington, and he sent me to the Senate gallery. It was a good experience for me. I met a lot of important men - Roscoe Conklyn among them. He wrote me a letter just before he died. Stanton was a funny fellow. He issued an order (when?) that no civilian should enter the army. Some of the boys on the Tribune staff were up there then and they thought they could not go back. I said to one of them, Let's go down anyway. He said, 'It's no use, we can't get in.' I said, My father used to tell me that you never could tell what you could do until you tried.' So we walked to the front - 25 miles or so. One night we stayed in a negro's cabin. Finally we picked up the army at Manassas, and then we telegraphed some news back to Wilkinson and I told him he could do what he pleased with me.

"Well, they let me stay. Then I went with Hancock to Culpepper, and afterwards I was with Grant.

Here Mrs. Wing came in and said that Gideon Welles has something to say about Wing in his Memoirs. * I must look this up before next meeting. For next interview get what he can tell about Greeley, also about Greeley and Lincoln.

Vol II - p 23 - "In May a correspondent of N. Y. Tribune called upon me this evening. (May 7, Saturday 1864)
He brings the first news we have had, but this is not full & conclusive
see text -