

Jan. 5, 1897.

Interview with Mr. H. B. Berry of the State Trust Co.,
 on recommendation of the Rev. George Hepburn.

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During the war Mr. Berry was stationed in Washington as a
 telegrapher with the American Telegraph Co. He was at this time a
 young man, frail and as his parents feared, diseased. He was a cousin
 of Leonard Swett. Mr. Berry desired to go into the army, but his rela-
 tives protested. In the fall of 1864, probably in November (look this
 up) Mr. Berry was drafted. He wrote his mother that he would now go
 into the army, but she telegraphed him to see Mr. Swett. Swett said
 that will be all right, I will get Mr. Lincoln to let you off," and he
 took Berry with him to see Lincoln. Lincoln said, "There is only one
 way to do this, that is to get a substitute. I am going to send a sub-
 stitute into the army and a man is going from here soon to North Caro-
 lina. Therefor \$100. one can ~~be~~ get a negro. I do not myself object
 to being represented in the army by a negro and am going to send \$100.
 with this man. You, Mr. Berry, can do the same thing." Mr. Berry con-
 sented and supposed the arrangement was concluded, but three or four days
 before his time expired he went to find Mr. Swett to know how matters

before his time expired he went to find Mr. Swett to know how matters were, and he was not in town. He went to the White House to see Mr. Lincoln about it. Lincoln recognized him at once and said, "You know that man did not go to N. C., so that ~~nothing~~ neither you nor I have our substitutes. The only way we can manage this is for you to get Mr. Swett to write a letter saying that you are not physically fit to go into the army and I will write a discharge for you. Mr. Swett was at this time at the Astor House in New York. Berry telegraphed him what he desired, the letter came immediately on Dec. 30, 1864. Mr. Berry went to Lincoln with Swett's letter and he wrote on the back of it, "Let this man be discharged? A Lincoln," with the date. Mr. Berry has this letter with the Lincoln endorsement on the back in his possession. After this incident Berry went ~~XXXX~~ often with Swett to see Lincoln in the evenings; he says his manner was always unaffected and cordial; that in his office he was careless about his desk and about his position, sitting often with one leg thrown over the arm of his chair and his arm thrown over the back. He liked with his friends to joke and tell stories, but Mr. Berry's impression was he rarely did anything of this

kind before strangers. He says he was present one night when a delegation of five men appeared at the White House from New Jersey. They had come to see about the quota of drafted men from their State; they were all very large men. Mr. Berry says he thinks he never saw five such large men and portly gentlemen together. Mr. Lincoln, Swett and Berry were sitting in a row on one side of the room, and these five men were sitting at some distance explaining their case. Lincoln was listening to them. Suddenly he turned to Swett and said in a low tone. "The State of New Jersey is a long narrow State, these five men all come from the north end; I should think when they left it would have tipped the State up." This remark was made without any smile on his face and such a way as not to attract the attention of the gentlemen or reach their ears.

Mr. Berry remembers no more incidents of his visits more than that he was always cordially received. He remembers Lincoln taking Swett and himself down to the conservatories one night to see a night blooming cereus. Mrs. Lincoln was there with visitors and Mr. Berry met her.

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At the time of Early's ~~read~~ the lines of the American Telegraph Co. were torn down by the rebels and Mr. Berry was sent out with loads of telegraph poles to restore the lines; at Fort Stevens, some two miles out, he met Mr. Lincoln who hailed him and wanted to know what he was doing. He seemed at the time to have no more fears but that the city would be safe.

Mr. Berry went with a party of friends to visit the battlefield of the First Bull Run. This was some four or five days after the battle. He says on the outskirts of the battlefield a small shanty had been put up for the accommodation of a telegraph operator. He knew this man well and went with his companions to the place. The shanty had nothing in it but the operator's outfit, a chair or two, and old stove, and standing in a corner a big black coffin on which the operator hung his coat. He told the boys that this coffin had been left by the confederates and that he had confiscated it. He said he frequently had visitors and as he had only two sets of blankets it was impossible to keep them warm, so that he would always put his extra man into the coffin, that being warm enough when the lid was down without a blanket.

The party that Mr. Berry was conducting was unable to get back to Washington the train not coming down, and asked the operator to accommodate them in his shanty. This he agreed to do, but told them he had nothing to eat except ham, the bread and other articles on which he depended coming daily from Washington, not being received because the train failed to get through. The young men stayed, making their supper from ham alone and Mr. Berry, because he was the thinnest, ~~went to bed~~ slept in the coffin.

passed. him around