Tarbell Ida M.
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News Gathering for Lincoln

We have never had a President of the United States as opinion-wise as Abraham Lincoln. His eyes and ears were always strained to catch the winds of people's thinking - whatever their volume - whatever the direction from which they blew. There were the big party winds of the "one-half" and the "other half" and the tertium quid; there were the daily, to be expected, squalls from the "Hill" - often nasty, treacherous squalls; there were the breezes in his cabinet, blowing hot and cold, and sometimes treacherous, too. He had rare skill in picking them up as they started and gauging their strength and velocity.

By the fourth summer of his Great Trial, 1864, he was fairly confident that he knew the mind of the North; but there was one crucial factor in his problem of which he was uncertain. That was the mind of the Army of the Potomac. He had given it a new commander, Grant - brought him from the West and placed him over officers whom the seasoned troops of the East understood and trusted. Grant's first undertaking had been a failure - with frightful loss. There was murmuring in the ranks - Would they hold? How was he to find out?

True, all officialdom was at his elbow, pouring numbers, movements, names into his ears. True, officers, agents, politicians came day and night with the stories of their exploits, grievances, ambitions, opinions; but it was of authorities, management they talked, not of soldiers, the men in the ranks, and in his judgment,

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they were the crux of the matter at that moment. And he had no view of their thinking that satisfied him. What he wanted to listen to was the wind that swayed the forest of men in arms - hear it in the talk at the camp fire, in the songs on the march, in the cries of the battlefield, in the moans of the wounded and dying. If he could only be one of them for a week he would know, but that was impossible; and one who had ears to hear the truth and the tongue to speak it did not often come his way. That he would know him if and when he should come was certain for in the three years of war through which he had passed his sense of a man's fitness for ~~his~~ purpose, always strong, had been quickened and deepened until it came to be almost as unerring as it was unconscious.

It was this sense that told him in May of 1864, when he was feeling most keenly the need of a personal news gatherer in the army that he had found his man. An unusual exploit, carried out with courage, quick wit and - rare thing in those days - discretion, had brought to Washington and to the President a young newspaper correspondent, Henry Wing by name. Here was the one for whom he was looking - he had no doubt about it; and when the youth was about to return to his post at Grant's headquarters and came to say good-bye to Mr. Lincoln and thank him for the kindness he had shown him, the President said:

"You are to see me whenever you come to Washington, Henry. It is an order. You are to tell me all you hear and see."

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Impressed as Henry Wing was by the President's words, he had no real conception of what was behind them. How could he know that Mr. Lincoln had a news service of his own, into which was admitted a hundred matters about men and things which no newspaper would consider - no official would regard as of moment. Certain it is, too, that neither Mr. Lincoln nor he could have dreamed that the "order" that he had just received was to be the starting point of a comradeship which was to last as long as the President lived and to continue as Henry Wing's most precious recollection up to his death in 1925.

If Mr. Lincoln had known anything of the past of the youth whom he had drafted into his service it would only have strengthened his conviction that he could get something - possibly much - from him. But at the moment he did not even know that Henry Wing had been a soldier, newspaper correspondents had been so rarely in the ranks. The boy in fact was a type of the sturdy youth of the period and very dear to Abraham Lincoln - self-directing, self-educating youth, which, regardless of its years, flocked by the thousands in the Northern army when the call came for volunteers. Connecticut was Henry Wing's State, his father a minister, the Reverend Ebeneazer Wing - "a good man" his son described him in later years, "and harsh like his name." Truth was, there was never sympathy and understanding between Ebeneazer Wing and his son."He thought I was not a good boy," I have heard the son say, "he never liked me -

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my mother liked me better. Mother was beautiful and gentle and wise. She could do anything with him. He loved her, loved her so hard it hurt him. I think he could not bear to have her care so much for me as she did. When I was a little shaver I used to wish sometimes that he would get drunk and be jolly and sing like the fathers of some other boys I knew. Of course I never told him that! He got so he couldn't stand mother and me being so happy - he thought it was wicked. When I was fifteen he turned me out to earn my living. He said nothing but work would ever make a man of me."

Possibly the Reverend Ebeneazer's theory was wiser than it sounds. The boy took hold with a will - taught, studied, term about, and finally returned to Connecticut to study law, paying his way by selling slate roofs which he put on mornings and nights! And thus the war found him.

One disturbing factor in the relations of Ebeneazer Wing and his son had been a life-long quarrel over slavery. The man was an Abolitionist of the most bitter and intolerant type. Henry Wing was temperamentally incapable of bitterness and intolerance on any subject. Moreover, his mother had taught on Southern plantations, and he had listened from childhood to her stories of life there. What his father said was not true he had concluded. The black man was better off than if he were free.

The boy's open rejection of his opinion was unbearable to Ebeneazer Wing - a defiance of the Divine command "Honor thy father."

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That his wife shared the boy's moderate view - had in fact inspired it - seemed not to affect him. She was a woman - her opinion did not count - moreover, she was the woman he loved.

Henry's complacent conclusion about slavery received its first rude jolt only after he had gone on his own, become a teacher in a seminary in Vermont. On the campus in the institution a young negro boy was employed. Henry liked him and was kind to him. One day this boy came to him in private, evidently in great trouble.

"Professor, I heard you say that it was foolish for a black man to run away."

"Yes," Henry said.

"And I heard you say that if you knew of a run-away slave you would help his master to catch him/"

Henry hesitated - "Yes," he said, "I would."

"Will you?" And then Henry knew that at last the boy's master was after him. No, he would not.

"Jake," he whispered, "they shall not get you."

And although, as a matter of fact, Jake's master was only four hours away they did not get him, for it was Henry's quick wit and savings that put him into Canada.

But his action disturbed him. He was a law-breaker, and to his consternation he knew he would do the same thing again. And yet in 1860 he refused to vote for Lincoln - perhaps because his father did! And then came Sumter - the call for troops. This had nothing to do with slavery - it was the Union which must be defended.

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He would pay his debts as quickly as he could and enlist.In the meantime he made speeches for the Union, He was eloquent, and the news of his eloquence spread. He was invited to make the address at a celebration given in the town where his father preached.

"It was abig affair" he would tell you reminiscing, "and they met me at the station with a chariot and four white horses. I talked two hours, explaining that it was not a war to free slaves, that the war was to save the Union.

"Then came the banquet out of doors with speeches, my father's the first. When he got up he shouted, 'Who would have thought that Ebeneazer Wing would have come to this disgrace - to be compelled to listen to such brutal sentiments from the miscreant bearing his name.'

"I was sitting by my mother, and she turned to me with a kind of twinkle in her eye. 'Henry,' she said, 'there's a train for South Norwalk in about an hour, I think you better take it.'

"I took it. And I never got the $20 they promised me for my speech!"

It was not long after this that he enlisted. He found his place in Company C, the right centre company of his regiment, the 27th Connecticut. Sixty years after this enlistment he told me the story of his soldiering. "I was very proud at the start," he said, "when I was chosen as one of the twelve boys in the color guard. We took it awfully serious. We swore we would die before our flag should be taken. You haven't any idea what a holy thing it was

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to us. I guess I felt about that flag like father seemed to feel about the family Bible. He always handled it gently, and I have seen him kiss it. I don't believe there was a color guard in the army that took better care of its flag than we boys did.

"It was not until December that we saw any real fighting, and that was at Fredericksburg. Our regiment was in Hancock's division, and they sent us across the river, right under the heights. We had been down in that country long enough for every man to know that those bluffs were stuck full of Confederate cannons and rifle pits, and that if theyever opened fire a chicken couldn't live on the field; but when Hancock came around the evening before the attack and told us we were to be ready to go out in the morning, we cheered and cheered him. It was awful cold that night. We huddled together, talked a little, and we fellows in the color guard got together and swore again that they should never get the flag as long as any of us was alive. That is what we thought most of - keeping the flag.

That night, when I was trying to sleep, a South Norwich boy in the guard crawled over to me. He was young, only about seventeen - he ought not to have been there. 'Henry,' he said, 'I want to tell you something. I am going to be killed tomorrow, and you are going home on crutches. My mother came to me last night and told me that.' His mother had died when he was two years old. I could not say anything. He didn't have any doubt it was so.

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and I didn't much. I know such things happen - people do come back and tell you what is going to happen. They did it all the time in that war.

"It was early in the morning when we went in. We were mighty proud of ourselves for a minute. The Confederates let us come on until we got to the very heights, and when we started up they opened on us and we went down like wheat does under a scythe - hardly a head standing. I was hit pretty quick in the leg, and I guess I didn't know much for a time. When I came to I raised up and looked for the flag. I could see it going down - coming up - going down - coming up; and then I remembered Will and what he had told me the night before. I wondered if he had been killed, and so I crawled over where I thought he would be, and there I found him - dead.

"I could not seethe flag any more and I began to worry about it. I just had to be sure that our boys still had it, and I started to crawl where I thought it might be, and then I got hit in the hand. After a little I crawled on again, and then I found the flag. And I found some more of our boys dead - there were ten of us killed there.

"I don't remember much what happened after I found the flag. The next thing I knew I was lying on top of a piano. There were doctors there and they had made a mark around my leg and another around my arm; and when I saw they meant to cut off my leg and my arm it made me mad, and I began to curse them. They just took me off

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the piano and threw me out on the grass. You couldn't blame them. There were twelve doctors for 1500 wounded men, and they couldn't have patients fighting them. They didn't think I would live anyway.

"It was Friday morning that they threw me out and it was not until Sunday night they got me to Lookout Hospital. The doctor came around and looked at me and went by - didn't say anything. Then a Sister of Charity came and asked me if she should get me a priest, and I said, No, that I was not a Catholic. Then she said, 'Shall I get you a minister?' 'Does that mean you think I am going to die? 'Yes,' she said, 'you cannot live over night.'

"I am not going to die," I said. "Before I left home my mother read from the Ninety-first Psalm: 'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh theee.' You are coming back, Henry, she said. You don't suppose that I am going to die after that, do you?

"That seemed to interest Sister Antoine, as they called her, and she sent one of her aides, Sister Mary, to take care of me. Sister Mary was young and pretty. She cut off those two fingers with a pair of scissors and picked all the proud flesh out of my wounds. Day and night for a week she sat there, flushing them with tepid water and castile soap, and every now and then giving me a few crumbs of bread in wine. I began to get well right away. She was the first girl I ever wanted to marry. I told Sister Antoine so, and she said, No, it could not be, that Sister Mary was a Bride of Christ. But I

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thought a lot about her for a long time.

"They dismissed me in March - on crutches. And of course that was the last of me as a soldier."

But if it was the end of his soldiering it was not the end of his work for the Union. Back in Connecticut he was soon making speeches and writing editorials - editorials so good that Horace Greeley noticed them and asked him to join the staff of the New York Tribune. But New York was too far from the army. The hunger to be near it again was on him. Would not Mr. Greeley find a place for him in the Washington bureau? Possibly, who knows, there was lurking in his mind the thought that Washington might mean a sight of Sister Mary - Sister Mary whose soft eyes, gentle voice and soothing hands he could not forget. At all events, he was transferred late in '1863 and there he was in March of 1864 when the long-standing feud between the War Department and the newspaper men culminated in an order from Secretary Stanton that no more civilians would be allowed to go to the front.

The order was not as unreasonable as it sounds. From the beginning of the war there had been trouble. The army's business was to conceal its movements, the correspondents considered it their business to reveal them. More than once attempted surprise movements had been laid out in all their details in Northern newspapers which had reached the Confederates in ample time for frustration. Little

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wonder that the Secretaries of War and Navy suspected the fraternity and often dealt harshly ~~and unjustly~~ with its members.

Officers, particularly those in positions of great responsibility, shared this dislike of correspondents, and more particularly because of their activity in trying to boost or pull down this or that man. Sometimes it was a grudge - wounded vanity back of the reporter's activities - he had not been asked to mess with the general - he had been refused a favor - he had been reprimanded. Again, it was a quite natural desire to flatter the vanity of the local constituency he served by telling how much superior some man who haled from their neighborhood was to the head of his corps - or the head of the army itself! Grant at one time was so hurt and disgusted by hostile and irresponsible newspaper comment that he considered leaving the army. As for Sherman, he was kept in a state of violent and profance indignation. The newspaper reporters were fools, he said, venal, their only object to pick up news. They were forever praising the idle and worthless who catered to them and crying down the hard working and meritorious who hauled them up for their indiscretions and disobedience of orders.

This feeling against the newspaper correspondent was at its height when Grant's campaign of 1864 was undertaken. Everyone agreed that there must be no leakages this time, hence Secretary Stanton's decree, given before the campaign opened, and, as it happened, when every correspondent of the Tribune was in Washington for the day.

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There was awful excitement - the chief of the bureau swore that any man who did not have dispatches from the army in his hands in forty-eight hours would be discharged. But nobody budged. It was too risky, they told one another. Stanton surely would clap any man into prison who was caught trying to reach the army, and they had no stomach for prisons.

Henry Wing listened in great disgust, and finally, crippled as he was, dared one of the men to try with him to run the blockade. The man took him up and forty-eight hours later, after a hazardous jaunt of some sixty miles, the two crept between the Union pickets. Henry's companion was safe- he simply was at his post, his credentials in his pocket. Henry was an unaccredited run-away. He wired his chief that he was there and his chief, who appreciated valor and was not averse to disobedience of orders if it meant news, immediately appointed him a correspondent of the New York Tribune with the Army of the Potomac.

The story of his exploit was soon spread through the army - also the story of his limp. A feeling for him very different from that for the ordinary run of correspondent grew among officers and men. He carried his wounds - all that they faced he had faced; and, though crippled, had taken the service that he was fit for and continued to run dangers as they did. Indeed, Henry seemed oblivious of danger. News to him was where action was; therefore he must be on the spot, whatever the risk. His quick eye and ear saw and heard official gestures and orders never intended for the newspaper men, and

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he acted on them. His daily adventuring into dangerous places and his escapes were the amazement of his colleagues. "Wing's luck" they called it. It was not luck, but unusual hardihood and quick wit.

But of all this Abraham Lincoln knew nothing when he annexed Henry Wing for his own private news service.

Henry rejoined the Army of the Potomac just in time for the battle of Spottsylvania and the beginning of a campaign of three weeks' fighting - the most dreadful ever seen on this continent. The boy told himself more than once in the tormented days through which he now went that never before had he any realization of what war might mean. He had lain in camps, had gone into one great battle to be cut down in ten minutes after he faced the enemy, he had lain wounded for forty-eight hours without food or care, he had been crippled for life; but nothing that he had experienced had seared his soul, had destroyed his love of war - he had wanted to go back to the army.

But this - this was a revelation of something of which he had had no conception. For three weeks the Army of the Potomac threw itself again and again against an entrenched foe intent on saving men as Grant seemed intent on destroying them. They fought, fell back, strove to turn flanks, were driven in; threw themselves against entrenchments only to be again driven back. They fought in bogs and thickets. Night and day in the unknown tangle, so familiar

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to their enemy they were shot as they boiled their coffee, rested about the camp fire, slept. Every tree seemed alive with sharp-shooters.

Amazed, outraged, Henry Wing threw himself into the thick of it, night and day. He was more soldier than correspondent. More than one tale was afloat in the Army of the Potomac of this merry, limping newspaper man who, caught in some fierce eddy of the disorderly fighting, seized a rifle from a fallen man and joined the fighters. The dreadful advance - for advance it was - went on day after day, interminably it seemed to Henry, until, after Cold Harbor, his body racked with unbearable pain from his reckless disregard of his crippled leg - his very soul aflame with despair and revolt, he took a boat ~~one night~~ for Washington with his dispatches.

All his bounding enthusiasm and companionableness was gone out of him. All he wanted was to be let alone, and he crept into an out of the way corner to rest. But the turmoil of nerves and soul left him no rest. It was there on the deck of the northbound boat that for the first time in his life he faced a desire, ending in a determination, to give up something that he had undertaken. He was going out of that hell.

Why should he go back? Had he not proved his willingness to serve? He was not a soldier, only a news gatherer. There were a hundred men eager for the place, let them have it.

His dispatches turned in, he sought his Washington bed; but his sleep was broken by paroxysms of pain, harassed by dreams of

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pallid dying men, staggering back from the fighting line or lying helpless in stacks of dead which crowded the battle fields.

The day was well along when, his ~~dauntless soul~~ still determination to quit unbroken, he sought the Bureau. He must tell his chief that he was resigning.

As he entered the office his chief looked up. "Henry," he said, "Mr. Lincoln knows you are here, he wants to see you ~~this evening.~~"

He had forgotten Mr. Lincoln - forgotten their compact. He must go and tell him his story before he resigned.

It was evening when he was admitted to the White House, and Mr. Lincoln was alone. As the man and youth met each felt a shock of ~~dismay~~pity at what he saw in the other's face. Three weeks before they had parted almost gayly - the man, if anxious, hopeful - the boy confident, buoyant; and now both looked from drawn gray faces into eyes dull with anguish. The look on the President's face jerked Henry Wing out of his self-absorption. It was not he alone that had seen dreadful sights, heard dreadful sounds. Were not the streets of Washington through which the President daily drove back and forth to his home on the Hill dripping with blood, - one long procession of wounded and dead. Were not the very corridors of the White House crowded from daylight to dark with raging men and weeping women? The fury and the sorrow of the country were on his head.

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Putting one long arm around the youth in affectionate greeting, the President pushed him to a chair on one side of the big office desk, seating himself opposite, his elbow on the table, his hand shading his eyes, his body bent forward. "Henry," he said, "I wish you would tell me all about it - everything since you left. What you have seen - heard. How does it look to you?"

The boy hesitated. Where to begin? He could never tell afterwards how he did begin, only that under the spell of those dark and suffering eyes intent upon him he began to talk and was soon talking out his very soul. He was one who for days having seen intolerable things which all the traditions of his life and profession forbade him to repeat now found himself suddenly under authority to speak. These things belonged to the President.

His story had no orderly sequence though he tried to keep one. It broke, ran away from him. He took up the trail, turned back, only to lose himself again. There were sudden outbursts of rage - rage that men who had led in these awful weeks should be so jealous of position, so intent on escaping from their own errors, that they would stop in the frightful struggle to accuse one another, to threaten, would weaken their own ability to act by hate and self-seeking. He had come upon it at the start - a commanding general and the ablest cavalry leader in the army weakening the whole tottering structure by a quarrel.

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The story went on: camps of men sleeping on their arms, attacks on battles in trenchments that laughed in their faces, in marshes, in jungles, bogs, in sunlight and in rain. The boy pictured the swamps and swollen streams, woods, rolling hills, the little court houses, churches, plantation houses, giving their names to struggles which men will never forget. The scenes and the story unrolled with details of awful deaths.

There was the "Angle of Death," the Bloody Angle. It had rained that day. He could not see, so he left his horse and followed afoot. He had lain on his stomach in a clump of bushes close by and he had watched a narrow Union line, often but two men deep, crumbling and crumbling as it fought for one little point. Men were thrown to right and left, killed and maimed. They piled up on each side while always behind came that narrow, indomitable stream breaking itself to rage against its enemy. And always those behind knew what was coming to them - they could see the piles growing. Well, they took the Angle, held it, died for it, and unsupported were ordered from it.

The story leaped from the Angle to Cold Harbor, twenty days later. If one was butchery, the other was murder - sheer murder. The boy's voice was hot with passion as he cried out the word. The army had known what it meant to take these heights at Cold Harbor. It had been there in 62 All the night before the attack, men prepared for death - writing farewell messages, pinning tags with their names and addresses on their coats.

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"An army moving across country to battle is beautiful to see, Mr. Lincoln. It was lovely at four o'clock - the time they went in at Cold Harbor. The fields were green and fragrant and dewy, and the birds were singing. I sat on a hill watching them move out. ~~I could see fields and streams and heights and woods.~~ The lines were so gay. There were flags flying, horses prancing - they went on so steadily and quietly. You could not think that it meant murder. I was watching Hancock's corps. There was a regiment of boys there I knew - boys I grew up with in Connecticut. Why, I had played hookey and gone swimming and 'spelled down' with dozens of them. I knew them by name - knew their fathers and mothers and sisters. They had never seen a real battle before - only skirmishes. They had kept them up here around Washington some eighteen months and then sent them down there. The old fellows had been poking fun at them - 'never seen fire yet, boys.' - 'I bet you will run ' that is what they would tell them. It was those boys I watched when the order came, and they went against those heights without a waver. There wasn't a chance of success. They knew it - but they went on just the same, dropping in their tracks as they came; and those behind rushed over the dead and wounded, and fell. You could not believe so many men could die in twenty minutes - and that is all the time it took. Lee killed 7,000 of us that day, and we hardly scratched him. It was murder - murder, I tell you." The strident, angry voice wavered, and the story wandered among the dead.

Always at night after the battles, he had gone over the

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fields of wounded and dead. All that night after Cold Harbor he had tramped up and down, looking for the Connecticut boys he knew, taking their names, their keepsakes, and always among them there were those that were not dead,yet dying,who had a message to give. He had brought up hundreds of names, scores of messages. It was all one could do. And when you had been there yourself, had lain all night wounded as he had after Fredericksburg, you could not bear to stop as long as there was a dead or dying man uncared for, you must help what you could.

Until now the listening President had sat motionless, his hand to his forehead, his sombre eyes fixed on the boy; but when the story touched on reminiscence he stirred to life, his hand came down, he sat up straight, astonished.

"You, Henry, a soldier - at Fredericksburg? That's where you got your limp?" And then slowly, "I never thought of that." He threw off the nightmare of the story he had been hearing - the story so awfully personal, for which he was so awfully responsible. His interest was suddenly intent on the boy who had been pouring out what he had seen and felt in this month with the battling army. He threw himself back in his chair, and swinging one long leg to the top of the desk, said, "Where were you born, Henry? Tell me about yourself. How did you get into the army?"

And Henry Wing probed by the President's questions, told his story, much, I imagine, as sixty years later he was to tell

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it to me, and as I have told it to you.

Wonder grew on Mr. Lincoln as he listened. "And after that" he exclaimed, as Henry ended with the story of his crippling, "after that you go back to the army - are going back again! Why, boy, you shame me. You've done your part - anybody would say that. You could quit in honor, but you stick. I wonder," he said in humility, "if I could do that. I don't believe I would. There's many a night, Henry, that I plan to resign - I wouldn't save again now if I didn't know these other fellows couldn't run the Union on their platforms - whatever they say. I can't quit, Henry - I have to stay, but you could and you don't. You give me courage, Henry Wing - make me feel if that's the kind of stuff the Army of the Potomac is made up of I needn't worry."

They had risen and were standing looking each other full in the eye, and the President as he looked possibly read something of the boy's revolt - his decision - for putting his arm about him he said almost pleadingly - so it seemed to Henry Wing - "I reckon we won't quit, will we, Henry?" and Henry, straightening himself up, said resolutely:

"No, Mr. Lincoln, we won't quit!"

And so their compact was renewed.

Throughout the summer and fall that followed Henry Wing always ended his frequent returns to Washington with a visit to the White House - a visit which extended frequently into the small hours of the morning.

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"Show me where you have been, Henry," was always Mr. Lincoln's first request, and Henry, spreading his field map on the table, would trace his movements. For Mr. Lincoln it was like riding at the youth's side; and as he traced his route he told a score of incidents - what had happened here - what he had seen or heard there - the unreported, the officially unimportant. An outsider listening to Henry's talk might have said that the human details with which it was filled, the talk of men at camp fires, their confidences, their plans, would be irrelevant to Mr. Lincoln's great purpose; to the listening President, hungry for the stuff that made up the life of the army, they were its very flesh and blood.

A feature of Henry Wing's talks to which the President listened avidly was his stories of those pathetic derelicts of war, young and old, feeble and crippled, that the passing army leaves and which must go down to destruction unless a strong hand is stretched out to save them. Henry Wing could no more pass one of these derelicts by than he could refuse to join a dangerous raid. There were many tales afloat at headquarters of his rescues. There was one about which his colleagues long teased him - his baby.

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He had come stealing breathless, soaked, bare headed into a sleeping camp one night, to inform headquarters that fifteen or twenty miles to the south ~~part of~~ a detachment had been surrounded by superior forces and unless promptly relieved would unquestionably be destroyed at day break. ~~It was carrying its wounded with it, for it had no hospital equipment. Its trains had been cut off. As soon as he had known of the plight~~ he had characteristically enough taken it on himself to try to get through to headquarters. It was a dangerous exploit for the lines lay so close together that there was no way at many points of telling friend from foe, but Henry Wing valued his skill as a scout much higher than he did that of many who bore the official title. Moreover, there was news to be put through - put through before anybody else got it, if possible.

He told his story tersely and clearly, pointing out on his field map with an accuracy which headquarters had learned to trust, the location of the trapped force. All the time that he was telling his news he was huddling close in his arms a little black baby. Even the excitement of his message and the ensuing confusion of sending relief did not prevent his colleagues asking, What in the world?--

It was a characteristic Wing exploit, so all agreed. At a moment in his dangerous journey when he knew himself to be close to an outpost - whether Union or Confederate he did not know - and was crawling through the tall grass which fringed a little lake, he heard what he recognized after a few moments of

breathless listening to be the babbling of an infant. Following the sound he had come upon a negro woman dying from a bullet in her breast, the chance shot of a picket, no doubt. She had only strength enough to point to the little one. All that Henry Wing could do to comfort her was to pick up the baby and tell her he would look after it.

He kept his word, for after she was dead, though he knew he possibly was endangering his life, he buttoned the child inside his coat and continued his perilous journey. What he expected happened. He had gone but a little way when the child began to cry, and instantly he was surrounded. He had stumbled into the outpost he knew to be near. Luckily for him he had struck the line, and he was immediately hustled to the commanding officer's tent with his message. And there he stood now, huddling the child to him. It was only when he heard the order given for rescue that he hurried off to the contraband camp to deposit his find in the arms of a motherly negress.

Often the human problems Henry shouldered could not be solved as easily as that of his baby, and again and again he sought Mr. Lincoln's help. As a matter of fact it was not long before the two were joined in a conspiracy of relief - how to extricate victims from the army law when they believed the victim was worth it - a victim not a criminal.

There was Henry's drummer boy, a case that was to go beyond them and find its way into literature. Coming up from

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the army by boat one hot night he had left his cabin where he was writing out his dispatches to stroll the deck for air. As he passed the wheel house he caught a glimpse of a forlorn little figure, huddling in a corner close to the rail. A child, he said to himself, but it was a child wearing the cap of a drummer boy. By his side was not only his drum but the equipment of an infantryman.

Henry Wing's friendliness was of that pure quality which dogs and children never suspect. They accept it as it is offered. In five minutes he was curled up in the corner beside the boy and a desolate little soul was telling him its story.

A year ago his mother with whom he lived up North had died. His father was in the Army of the Potomac. He had gone from his mother's grave to his home, taken his drum - every boy in those days had a drum - and had slipped out of the town by a southbound train. He was only twelve years old, and small for that. Kindly conductors and brakemen, hearing his story, had passed him on. Wonderful tribute to human tenderness! He had actually found his father, had been accepted as a drummer boy and had tapped his way through the Wilderness to the James. Then, two days before, his father had been killed. He had taken his rifle, his canteen, his belt and had left the army. He was going back to his mother's grave.

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Henry Wing gathered up drum, rifle and canteen, and with one arm around the child, led him to his stateroom, where he fed him and put him in his own bed. That night he sat in a chair. The next day they were in Washington. It was something of a problem. He had pressing work and the child clung to him. In the afternoon, his duties led him to the White House, to the President, who kindly listened to the whole story.

"What are we going to do with him, Henry?" he asked, when Henry Wing had finished. "We", you see! "He must have a pass at once. I suppose if the provost marshal got his eye on him he would clap him into prison as a deserter,"- which technically of course he was. The President wrote him a pass, and the two decided that for the moment they would ask the Christian Commission to give him a home.

Not many hours later Henry Wing, whose duties had called him to the Senate Chamber, was greeted by a well known Senator, - "About that drummer boy, Wing? I want him. I am going to give him a home and an education."

"How in the world did you hear about him?" Henry asked.

"Well," he said, "some of us went up to the White House to see Mr. Lincoln. The first thing he did was to tell us about your boy. It looked as if he could not get down to business until he had settled him into what he called good hands. Had us all blubbering. I am going to take care of that boy."

~~Very early in the summer's association Tad came on the~~

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As the weeks went on and Henry sensed more and more Mr. Lincoln's imperative need of knowing how far he could count on the Army of the Potomac he redoubled his efforts to understand it himself. He began to see it as it was, as army dominated by veterans - men who had been at Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville; officers who knew no other field than Virginia nor any other objective than Richmond. He found that it had its habits, "ways", code, its peculiar institutions. One of these institutions, of which he made free use, was the unique news service which the veterans had developed for their own satisfaction, and which they trusted far more implicitly than the official bulletins, framed they said cynically to tell what ought to have happened - not what did. This news service was carried on by a fraternity known in the ranks as "Camp Walkers," - men with an insatiable natural curiosity about what was going on. Back home they had always gone "up street" at night to the drug store, the corner grocery, to tell what they knew and to hear what others had to tell. Turned soldiers, they were not content with the news of their own company. The whole army was their field, and gradually they formed the habit of dropping in at camp fires night after night to ask questions, repeat what they had heard elsewhere and push on. Frequently it was midnight and later before they wereback in their beds.

The Camp Walkers accepted Henry as one of their own. Had he not been a solider, and had he not proved a courage which many of them asked themselves whether or not they would have had, when,

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unfitted for soldiering, he had nevertheless come back to face death all over again, for they knew well enough, these men with whom he nightly tramped and talked, that night and day in this campaign he was running the same risks they did.

It was not only the news they brought that Henry was interested in, the discussion of the campaigns by these men were well worth any reporter's attention, and particularly valuable did he consider them for Mr. Lincoln. There were few of the more intelligent ones that did not carry inside their pockets a good sized field map - maps, some of which had gone through the whole three years. They knew the topography of the country better than many of their officers, and they had their own notions of strategy. As a matter of fact, the veterans view military matters with a practical common sense similar to that of Lincoln himself, and they supported what they believed to be false moves and defeats a good deal as he did, with disgust - and patience.

The Camp Walkers' news and comments figured constantly in Henry's talks with Mr. Lincoln, giving him tthat sense of what the men were doing and feeling for which hewas so hungry. Unquestionably he got a better realization that from any other source of the contempt that the veterans had for Grant's use of men in the southward march. They were willing to die, but they thought it was stupid to spend seasoned men as he was spending them, to make attacks on breastworks which must fail - it was not worth it. And they were particularl indigant that the ranks depleted by these repeated futile attacks should be filled by a class of men for whom they had supreme contempt - "Coffee Boilers" they called them. Tthey were men who had been

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paid to come into the army. The veterans had three classes of men for whom they had the highest respect - Americans, Irish and Germans, but to hear them talk of Coffee Boilers you would suppose that they were come of an entirely distinct race, though probably most of them had one or the other of the three favored origins. No veteran, however, would have admitted that a Coffee Boiler could be either Irish, American or German. ~~He was a non-descript, a coward, and only wanted to save his skin.~~ Henry could bring back story after story of the absolute glee with which the seasoned men saw shells scattering groups of Coffee Boilers, of the refusal of surgeons to aid one of this group when they found he had inflicted a self-injury as sometimes happened, or of the way when one of them had turned tail all the veterans in line would combine to drive him back.

Mr. Lincoln's heart was sick again and again when he felt the just criticism of these brave fellows at the ruthless warfare which must replace men of such sterling worth and sense by so many that were venal and contemptible.

As the army worked its way south, the dissatisfaction of the men grew. They felt that at more than one point Lee had been in their hands if the matter had been properly pushed. There were delays, that they violently cursed - cursed even to the face of officers frequently, for they were a tribe for whom all illusions about officers had been dispelled. They obeyed them, yes, that was necessary, but they looked them through and through. There was not

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one of them that would not have told Grant himself what he thought of him if it had come in his way.

Nothing was more encouraging to Mr. Lincoln than Henry's reports of how Grant, in spite of what the men felt of his senseless wasting of their force, grew on them. It was the conviction that Grant was not going to turn back as he had sent word to Mr. Lincoln at the beginning of the campaign, that won these men. For the first time they told themselves grimly around the camp fires, Lee was no longer the Commander of the head of the army of Northern Virginia. It was noticeable that before they reached the James they were singing - and singing heartily - "Ulysses Leads the Van." And the exultation of the groups around the camp fires to whom the Camp Walkers had brought the news that Lee did not know where Grant was - which was true - for some four days - well, they would have been willing to have died on the spot to have that certainty. But to have lost that advantage, not to have been in Petersburg as every man felt that they might have been if the thing had been pushed, was one of the old disgusting failures - a failure over which the President groaned as bitterly as they did.

It was not until the middle of July that Henry could bring back to the President any news that stirred to hope. The army was camping around Petersburg, bitterly cursing its luck, suffering from the heat and the fever, utterly disgusted with the idea that they were in for what they believed was going to be a long siege. Henry, however, did not believe it was to be long.

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An exciting new secret movement was on hand - one which he believed would end the war. This was the tremendous mine which in July of 1864 was laid under a portion of the Confederate defense.

To the boy it was an amazing thing that men should come and go, carrying out earth and carrying in timber and explosives, under the very feet of the enemy. Why, he told the President, he had even heard the voices of the Confederates over his head when he had been allowed as a special privilege to visit the galleries. The thing could not fail. There would be one vast upheaval, the Union troops would pour in on the surprised Confederates. Petersburg would fall, and there would be an open road to Richmond.

But the Petersburg mine was only another of those costly miscarriages that had distinguished the Union warfare in Virginia for over three years. Mr. Lincoln was to hear much of what happened - many stories besides that of Henry Wing though it is doubtful if any was more vivid, more replete with indignation and depression.

He had awaited the hour of the explosion with impatience, he was so sure it was to be a grand success. And what news to send after weeks of stories of half victories, or of victories almost worse than defeat, to be able to report one grand, over-powering, unexpected stroke!

Long before dawn of the morning fixed, July 30, he had ridden to a knoll overlooking Petersburg - the knoll where Grant and Meade with their staffs had rendezvoused. He had been greatly

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excited there by the exaltation that he read in the faces of the men. Even Grant himself seemed stirred. They were all so sure this time. There could be no failure everybody felt. Again and again every movement had been rehearsed. It had been like the preparation for a vast pageant, only here the death and destruction were to be realities, not pretences.

The moment set for the firing of the fuse which was to begin the terrific opening act was 3:15 A.M. Henry, watch in hand, breathlessly, like the company near him, waited for the great moment. It did not come. 3:15 came and went. 3:30 - 4:0 A. M., and as the minutes passed, anxiety, consternation, despair, wrath, went through the little group. They were helpless. No move could be made without danger of destroying everything, until they knew what had happened, what was delaying.

Then came an aide, with news that the fuse had gone out. There had been volunteers to go in and examine it. A new attempt was making. But an hour had passed and daylight was on them before the explosion planned came. It was an awful upheaval - earth, rocks and men were thrown high into the air overhalf a mile, leaving a crater like the yawning mouth of a great volcano wherethe enemy's fort had been.

The explosion had come, now for the attack. The troops were immediately to rush in, but they did not rush. There was a long silence. Through their glasses the watching party saw the Confederates rallying to their breastworks - great movement among them, none

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on the part of the Union troops. Henry Wing on his horse close to the Lieutenant-General of the Army heard him muttering to himself, "Why don't the boys go in? Why don't the boys go in?" And then, when the minutes passed and they did not go in, when he saw the enemy rallying, he wheeled his horse and started for the scene, Henry Wing at his heels.

The story of what he saw on that wild ride he told until his death. He believed that he had seen with his own eyes the cause of the failure of the explosion of the Petersburg mine, for reaching the scene of attack and leaving his horse to reconnoitre, he had suddenly come upon a man stretched prostrate on the ground in a drunken stupor. It was the officer who was to have led the charge! The boys had not gone in because their commanding officer was drunk. It was this story with all its detail that he told the President, adding with boyish generosity, "He was one of the best officers in the army, Mr. Lincoln, I never saw him intoxicated. He had taken a bracer for the morning's work - then another, and another." And the President, his head buried in his hands, had groaned, "Oh, Henry, why do men get drunk just when they ought not to?"

The story of the Petersburg mine, its grandiose preparation, the confidence of those who were in the secret that it was to be the death blow to the Confederacy, its failure through unforgivable bungling, fed the anger of the North. It was madness to go on sacrificing men - let the South go - give her back her slaves - let

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us have peace - peace at any price.

Politicians worked with energy on fagged, revolting men and women. They offered them McClellan and "the cessation of hostilities" - Frémont, and it was not too sure what - no more of Lincoln at least. The strong and hostile winds of opinion which had been blowing now for weeks became by August furious biting gales, converging to one point - the President. He lived in a whirlwind of opposition - a man without a friend - his opponents confident - contemptuous - Congress sneering and hindering. Intrigue in his cabinet, dismay in his party. Even his best and oldest friends came to tell him in solemn tones that his defeat was certain unless he should compromise - delay a draft, consider peace overtures - something to soothe the country's agony - until after election! "Deceive as to my intention," he retorted, ~~flatly~~ scornfully refusing.

Lincoln's deepest concern in August of 1864 was not civilian and official opposition, however strong and bitter it might be. He was more and more concerned with the army's view of things. "Henry," he said in one of their long night talks in this dreary period, "I would rather be defeated with the soldier vote behind me than to be elected without it."

"~~They will~~ you will lose it, Mr. Lincoln, ~~they will~~ you will lose it" was his repeated insistence, "They'll vote as they shoot" and his close association with the soldiers only intensified this faith. What he had become convinced of was that the veterans were set on finishing their job, and not at all concerned with politics. Their pride as soldiers was

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stirred. There was not one of them but realized that Lee was in their grip. They never would let him loose now. They might love McClellan - most of them did - but he had not taught them to fight. it was Grant that had done that. He had led them on but never back. And who had given them Grant? Why, Lincoln. And who was backing Grant, even at the risk of his defeat in the approaching election? Lincoln. They would vote as they shot.

Mr. Lincoln, listening and carefully balancing what the boy was reporting from the army with what he was hearing from other quarters, said grimly to him one night in reply to his confident assurances, "All right, Henry, but if they turn their backs to the fire and get burned they will have to siton the blister."

They did not turn their backs to the fire that November: At the primitive polls set up for them in the camps - a tent - a table under a tree - the end of an ambulance - three fourths of the soldiers in the Army of the Potomac dropped into improvised ballot boxes, from cartridge or cracker cases, and in one case at least an old pork barrel--votes for Abraham Lincoln.

Henry Wing saw the man whom he had come so to trust and honor, freed from the burden of uncertainty about the fate of the Union, which he had been carrying. Now Grant could end the war. As for him, his thoughts were no longer with armies, they were already busy with the future, planning how order could be restored, how every one, North and South, could be put at some peaceful occupation. It seemed sometimes to Henry as if Mr. Lincoln's thought took in every acquaintanceship that had been dislocated by the war. "Henry," he asked the boy, "what are

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you going to do when thewar is over?"

"Well, Mr. Lincoln," replied young Wing, "I think I will go on with the law. I have an idea that I could get elected to Congress - think I would like that."

"Don't begin on Congress unless you go on with it, Henry," he said. "One term doesn't mean much. It takes that long to start, learn the ways, get acquainted with the men. I had only one term, I know how it is. When you get down there you must remember that you have to prove yourself to those that have been here a long time. It is pretty hard on a new comer. No, I wouldn't go in for Congress, Henry, unless I was sure I was going to stick to it long enough to have it amount to something."

The advice stuck in Henry Wing's mind. What could he do? It must be something that would help Mr. Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln, he told himself, was in for trouble when the war was over. There were some strong fellows on the Hill and in the country who did not believe in his idea of letting the South down easy. They sneered at the words of mercy that had begun to show themselves in the President's talk, public and private. They were for punishment, hanging, outlawing: protectorates must be established. Lincoln was talking treason.

Now, Henry ~~Wing~~ was with the President. He had inherited none of the ~~righteous~~ righteous Ebeneazer Wing's capacity for hatred. Mr. Lincoln was right - they should let them down easy. But how could he help?

He found a way to his liking in the winter of 1864-65, for after the army settled down for the winter and there was nothing exciting doing, Horace Greeley had called him back to New York. Close to the great editor and his staff, he saw his course - he

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would become an editor - the editor of a paper of his own, and it should be in Connecticut. There were too many men in that State, in his judgment, who hated the man he loved. He would become his armor-bearer there, fight his battles. The paper he chose and bought was a weekly sheet, seasoned by forty years of experience - The Litchfield Enquirer. But he was in no hurry to take hold of his possession. He wanted to see with his own eyes the end of the war, and when in March it became certain that that end was near he hurried back to his old post at Grant's headquarters. He had been there but a few days when the President came down for a visit.

If Henry Wing had any idea that Mr. Lincoln's friendship had cooled in the months that his visits to the White House had been interrupted, the warm welcome that he gave him at their first accidental meeting on the grounds, dispelled it. Hurrying out from the telegraph office he had almost collided with the presidential party. Mr. Lincoln spying him called out an immediate hearty greeting. "We must have a talk", he said, putting his arm around the boy's shoulder, he walked away from the company, down the road following the river. "Too many people here," Mr. Lincoln said, "let us get into that boat" and the President himself laying hold of the rope to which was tied a little skiff floating out in the stream, drew it to shore, and directing Henry to seat himself in the stern, crawled in after him; then the rope allowed the boat to drift as far as it would, far enough for their talk to be entirely quiet.

"And now," said Mr. Lincoln, drawing up his knees so they

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almost touched his chin, and clasping them with his long arms, "tell me about things. What have you been doing?"

And Henry told him of his winter, with many anecdotes of his erratic chief, told him of the purchase of The Litchfield Enquirer and of his determination to go back there and support him in the fight for a merciful reconstruction. The talk ran on over the many happenings since their last meeting, and came up to the situation of the moment. "The war is just about over," Mr. Lincoln said, as he picked up the rope to pull their skiff back to shore. "Sherman is closing on Lee from the South. It will be only a few days now. I don't want our armies to crush him, I want the Army of the Potomac to have the satisfaction of capturing General Lee - it is due them. For four years they have been at this thing. I want them to end it."

The Army of the Btomac was to have that satisfaction, and Henry Wing was to be in at the finish, a finish for which he cunningly and completely planned. As soon as Lee's army was known to be in retreat Sheridan attempted a detour around it with his cavalry and Henry Wing went along. As they were approaching Appomatox, Gordon's cavalry ~~attempted an attack. They were~~ came dashing down a slope towards the Union line when suddenly, in full view of both forces, a white flag fluttered to the breeze.

There was an immediate halt. Horses were pulled up in their tracks, and the startled troops and their commanders waited. Not Henry Wing. He dashed for headquarters. With his usual foresight

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he had arranged with a friendly member of Grant's staff that if Lee did surrender, as was expected, this man, as soon as it was certain, should come out from the house where they were quartered, take off his hat and wipe his forehead three times with a handkerchief. There were other signals for other contingencies.

He rode into the groups, blue and grey, gathered about the house where the two great chiefs were in council, and dismounting, stood in apparent unconvern - though really intensely alert.

A man opened the door, came out, took off his hat and wiped his forehead three times with a handkerchief.

Henry Wing was in his saddle on the instant, dashing off with his news, his one object in life at that moment ~~being~~ to beat the correspondent of The New York Herald!

It was his last dispatch. The war was over. He hurried at once to Litchfield to take possession of the Enquirer. He worked quickly, for if one looks over a file of the journal preserved in the town's public library, he will find that the issue of the 13th of April, 1865 bears the valedictory of its retiring editor and bespeaks for its new owners, Wing and Shumway, the "same generous patronage and kind ways that have been afforded us."

It was on the morning of the 15th of April that Henry Wing sat down at his desk to write his salutatory - a happy, confident youth, doing the thing that he wanted to do, following a leader in whom he believed.

He was sitting with a tender smile on his lips, a twinkle

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in his eye - he was going to write something of which his mother would be proud and which his father would have to accept.

As he put his pen to paper, the door opened and a boy came in, dropping a telegram on his desk. He opened it and read: "Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, assassinated last night in Ford's Theatre, Washington, died this morning at twenty-two minutes past seven."

The waiting pen traced not the gay words of salutation on its tip, but the cry of an anguished heart:

"Our Chief Executive murdered! O God! What a world of sorrow in that sentence!"

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