

Walt Home Chronicle

scene. One night the two were bending over Henry's field maps when there came a succession of knocks on the door. Mr. Lincoln paid no attention to them. They became louder, turned to blows, and then came a peremptory little voice, "Let me in!"

Mr. Lincoln rose and opened the door. There in a long white night gown was Tad, an indignant, sputtering little accuser, "Why didn't you let me in?" "You didn't make the sign," the President said. "I forgot it," the child told him.

"We will have to rehearse it," said Mr. Lincoln; and taking the boy on his knee and holding his little fist tight in his big bony hand, he rapped out the military telegraphic call for Washington - three short quick taps followed by two slow ones. Over and over again they rehearsed, "and now" said Mr. Lincoln, "next time, if you don't give the signal properly I shall not let you in here, I shall take you back to bed."

Tad remembered Henry. He had seen him the day his father had ridden Jess. His interest in the horse was keen, "Ask him how Jess is," he whispered to Mr. Lincoln. "How is Jess?" the President asked, and the drop in Henry's face told him of disaster.

"Not dead, I hope?" said Mr. Lincoln.

"No - not dead - but captured."

Then he told the story of his loss of the brave and beautiful creature which had carried him for many weeks through many dangerous escapades. There had come a point in the march

to the James when if he was to get his news to Washington he must somehow reach a distant point on the Potomac where the river boat stopped. The country between the army and the boat landing was alive with bushwhackers, and Henry Wing knew better this time what he was doing than when he had turned Jess northward that morning weeks before when he had so confidently left Grant's headquarters at the end of the first day of the Battle of the Wilderness. He had a desperate experience but he reached the river and was turning back, though with something of a sinking heart. The chances of his reaching the army were all against him. Yet for several hours the two brave and quick-witted companions skirted dangers successfully, raced enemies and came near and nearer to their goal. Confidence was restored when suddenly taking a turn in the road they collided with a file of grey cavalry men.

Jess did not wait for a signal, but flew down the road. Henry Wing knew, however, that it was hopeless, that he was surrounded, and that further flight meant death for both. The only possible escape for him was to leave Jess and take to the jungle which he was skirting. Leaping from the horse and bidding him stand, he slipped into the shadows. The only consolation he had, so he told the President and Tad, was that he believed from the glimpse he had of the face of the trooper who overtook Jess that he knew and loved a good horse.

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"Of course he may be dead," Henry went on, "but if he is I think I shall see him again, Mr. Lincoln. After what I have seen of horses in this war you cannot make me believe that they will not live again."

"'For that which befalleth the sons of men,'" quoted Mr. Lincoln, "'befalleth beasts, as the one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they all have all one spirit; a man hath no pre-eminence above the beasts.'"

An outsider listening to Henry's talk might have said that the human details of unimportant people with which it was filled, the description of an officer in battle, the talk of men at camp fires, their confidences, their plans, would be irrelevant to Mr. Lincoln's great purpose; but it was never so. Abraham Lincoln steered his course as President of the United States by the winds of opinion; his eye and his ear were always strained to catch the gusts from every quarter. They blew great and furious in the summer of 1864. 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" - nasty, often 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 - few men have ever been as opinion-wise as Abraham Lincoln.

Most difficult of all for him to understand at this moment, and most important, was the opinion of the army - to know what the men in line thought, had become by the third summer of his Great Trial essential to the course that he must steer. If the army did not trust the new commander he had given it, Grant - if it had begun to doubt him, Abraham Lincoln, then the cause of Unionism must, in his judgment, go down in defeat for the time. As for himself, well, that did not matter.

But how find out what the army thought? What he wanted to hear was the wind that swayed the forest of men in arms - hear it in the talk at the camp fires, in the songs on the march, in the cries of the battle field, 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 those who had ears to hear the truth did not often come his way. It ^{was} his certainty that Henry Wing was such an one that led him to make the compact with him that he did the night after he had poured out the story of the Bloody Angle, of Cold Harbor, of his own boyhood, of his coming to the army and of his being crippled for life at Fredericksburg.

And Henry, sensing more and more clearly Mr. Lincoln's problem, and more and more deeply committed to serving him, redoubled his efforts. He had discovered that the unique news service which the veterans had developed for their own satisfaction

in the three years that they had followed the Army of the Potomac, was the fullest and most reliable source of information open to him. Indeed he had joined the fraternity of "Camp Walkers" as these news gatherers and retailers were known in the ranks. The fraternity was made up of men with an insatiable natural curiosity ~~for~~ about ~~what~~ what was going on ~~about them~~. They were the kind of men that back home had always gone "up street" at night to the drug store, the corner grocery, the court yard if it happened to be a county seat, to tell what they knew and to hear what others had to tell about the happenings of the town, the county, and often of the state and nation. Turned soldiers they were not content with the news of ~~what was going on~~ 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 the Camp Walkers were back in their beds. This news service had come to have such a standing with the privates that they had far more trust in it than they had in any official bulletins.

The Camp Walkers accepted Henry as one of their own. Had he not been a soldier, and had he not proved a courage which many of them asked themselves whether or not they would have had, when 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 as 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 Henry consider them for Mr. Lincoln. As a matter of fact the veterans viewed military matters with a practical common sense similar to that of Lincoln himself. They supported what they believed to be false moves and defeats a good deal as he did, with disgust - and patience. There were few of the more intelligent ones that did not carry inside their pockets a good sized field map - maps, some of them that had gone through the whole three years. These men knew the topography of the country better than many of their officers, and they had their own notions of strategy.

The Camp Walkers' news and comments figured constantly in Henry's talks with Mr. Lincoln, giving him that sense of what the men were doing and feeling for which he was so hungry. Unquestionably he got a better realization than 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 veterans as he was spending them, to make attacks on breastworks which must fail - it was not worth it. And they were particularly indignant that the ranks, ~~which he~~ depleted by ^{futile} these repeated ~~confederate~~ attacks ~~because they saw their numbers~~ should be filled ~~being replaced~~ by a class of men for whom they had supreme contempt - "Coffee Boilers" they called them. They were men who had been