

Capt. S. H. Beckwith, Grant's Shadow, Describes Thrilling Incidents of General's Historic Operations During the Civil War

This is the last installment of a remarkable story in which the writer describes the thrilling incidents of General Grant's historic operations during the Civil War. Capt. Beckwith is now a resident of Utica, N. Y., and is 74 years old. During the War of the Rebellion he possessed the confidence and respect of Gen. Grant to an unlimited degree, and next to that commander himself he held all the most important secrets of the campaign of the years 1862-1865.

Edited by William Ross Lee.

Chapter X. (Continued).

Gen. Phil Sheridan was a midget. He weighed only 140 pounds at this time and was short of stature, being 5 feet 4½ inches in height. One would hardly have picked him out as the dashing cavalry leader whose fame had now spread world wide, but something in his rough, manly face indicated unique character and courage. One sensed a latent force that the smoke and fire of battle called into invincible action. He was comparatively a young man (he was but 33 years of age), and he showed a becoming deference to his older comrades. He wore an ordinary service coat and a small brown hat; and, like his companions, was without sword or belt or gloves.

While the lecture was in progress the towering form of Lincoln entered the tent ("towering" I use advisedly, his stovepipe hat bringing his altitude pretty close to the 7 foot mark). He walked over to Little Phil and extended his huge hand in greeting. Sheridan, nonplussed, perfunctorily responded.

"I used to think at the beginning of the war," said the President, shaking the General's hand with great heartiness, "that a cavalry leader should be 6 feet 4 inches in height. I have changed my mind"—still shaking the hand and beaming down upon the soldier—"5 feet 4 will do very well."

I thought that the handshaking process was going to last interminably, so cordial and buoyant was the warmth of Lincoln's greeting. Throughout it

all Sheridan said not a word; he stood like a schoolboy before the master, his face suffused with a modest blush. And when "Uncle Abe" abruptly turned on his heel and left the tent the little General remained apparently transfixed, while Sherman continued his recital of his march to the sea. I did not hear him utter a syllable of comment on the flattering honor that had been paid him.

XI.

Abraham Lincoln.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was, I believe, the greatest man this country has produced. I did not, of course, have the opportunity of knowing the President that I had of knowing Grant; but I enjoyed several days of rare intimacy and came to esteem and revere him. I realize that a wealth of story has been told about him and that I can add little of interest to the abundance; hence my contribution will be brief.

Grant had a wholesome liking and respect for Lincoln. They seemed, each of them, thoroughly to understand the other and to trust the other implicitly. The Administration had been trying out men as Generals in a resolute endeavor to find the man who could bring victory to the Union arms and end the war within a reasonable time. The experiment had proved costly and discouraging. McDowell, McClellan, Pope, Burnside and Hooker had been given the chance to make good and they had failed. Even Meade, after the splendid success of Gettysburg, seemed to rest

content with his laurels and fall short of the measurements demanded.

Gen. Grant's successes in the West had stamped him with the mark of genius. He was selected as Lincoln's last hope, and when the President knew his worth and saw his handiwork, he placed the army in his keeping and backed the intrepid soldier in his every move. And Grant appreciated highly the cooperation and loyal support given him from Washington. Unlike McClellan and his successors, he did not bombard the Capitol with petitions and remonstrances and criticisms and appeals for reinforcements. He knew that the country was sending him all the men available; he knew that he had the confidence of the Executive and his Cabinet; he knew what was expected of him; and he did it as best, as quickly as he could, without complaint or boasting or vain display.

While there was no close friendship between Lincoln and his General, born of personal relationship and intercourse, there was a reciprocal regard that was perhaps even better. When the news of the President's reelection in November, 1864, reached City Point, Grant was deeply gratified. Naturally he construed the verdict of the people as a cordial ratification of his own leadership in the field, which was part and parcel of the Administration policy. He at once wrote a congratulatory message to Secretary Stanton and handed it to me in person for translation into cipher and transmission to Washington. It expressed his conception of the meaning and the results of Republican victory.

(Cipher.)

HEAD QUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES, CITY POINT, Va., Nov. 10, 1864.

Hon. E. M. Stanton, Sec. of War, Washington.

Enough now seems to be known to say who 's to hold the reins of Government for the next four years. Congratulate the President for me for the double victory. The election having passed off quietly, no bloodshed or riot (sic) throughout the land, is a victory worth more to the country than a battle won. Rebelism and

Europe will so construe it.

U. S. GRANT,
Lt. Gen.

I was not present at Lee's surrender at Appomattox April 9. Gen. Grant had assigned me to the President and I accompanied the latter on Admiral Porter's barge from Richmond to City Point. I was to keep him in touch by telegraph with the army in its advance movement and with the War Department at Washington. For the next two weeks out of the three yet remaining to him Lincoln was my constant employer. He would come over in the morning from the River Queen and take his seat at the desk which Col. Bowers had supplied him, and there he would sit most of the day waiting for news from front. The telegraph office was in hospital tent about 150 yards away. A message arrived directed

to the President an orderly brought it to me, if it was in cipher, and I translated it as quickly as possible. This done I took it myself to Lincoln, always saluting as I presented it and awaiting orders. If it were a despatch that required an answer I would stand beside him while he slowly and methodically composed his reply, reading it over to see that he had correctly stated his ideas.

I was kept pretty busy with my official labors, for Mr. Lincoln was exceedingly anxious to secure information about everything of importance that was going on. Occasionally I would find him poring over a map of the State of Virginia and diligently tracing the positions of the armies. My tent was but a few feet from his own quarters and our neighborly situation developed a satisfying friendliness. It was a time when the last act of the war drama was drawing to its close, and naturally the heart of every Union man was filled with exultation. Father Abraham shared in full measure the spirit of thanksgiving and hopefulness. His lined and careworn face appeared to lose some of its native sadness and he looked forward, I am sure, with trust and confidence into the future. And certainly from his rounded shoulders a mighty burden was lifting.

The President was, of course, immensely popular with the soldiers everywhere. All of them, from the generals down to the privates, knew that in him they had a sympathetic friend, a kind and wise protector. The names bestowed upon him, "Uncle Abe," "Father Abraham," "Old Abe," and the like, were terms of genuine affection. The boys felt that he was with them and of them. Stories of his great tenderness of heart were common property of the camp, and the human side of this tall, ungainly, homely man brought him very close to us all.

As with Grant, awe of Lincoln's greatness did not oppress me. They were too genuine and democratic. But I realized then, at least looking back upon him through the years, I realize now the almost infinite depth and breadth of his mind and heart and soul.

It may seem improbable to my readers that in the presence of this wonderful man I did not feel a sense of

awe, a consciousness of my own inferiority. The simple truth is that Uncle Abe did not inspire any such feeling in those who knew him. His manner was so candid and unaffected that you felt admitted into his brotherhood as an equal; at least you felt that he so wished it, which is perhaps just as good.

I was standing one day outside headquarters tent, when the President came along in company with two or three officers. He stopped at my side and looked me over with a critical eye. Then throwing his arm about my neck and straightening up his lofty form so as to make the disparity in our heights the more noticeable (I am but 5 feet and 5 inches tall), he said to those present: "Difference in stature, gentlemen, is not always indicative of difference in ability."

Then he slapped me cordially upon the back and with a chuckle passed into the tent.

It is not my intention to repeat incidents which are already familiar to my readers; hence I must omit from these memoirs many interesting experiences which I shared with President Lincoln during the two weeks that I served him as operator. Bates has drawn liberally upon my stock of reminiscences, and the residue is hardly worthy of preservation. I could write of the visit which Lincoln paid to Richmond on the 4th and 5th of April, when I accompanied him at his direction; but the history of that visit, in brief, has already been chronicled by my friend. I could tell something of his wonderful facility in story telling; but that subject has been thoroughly exhausted. So you see that I am somewhat in the position of the man who has a great deal to relate, but having related it before, no one cares to listen.

When the Federal forces were closing in on Lee and the ragged army of the South was striving, like a desperately hunted stag, to elude its pursuer, Sheridan, whose cavalry was pounding at the enemy's tired feet, sent a hasty report to Grant, concluding with these words: "If the thing is pressed, I think that Lee will surrender." The General forwarded the despatch to Lincoln, who instantly replied: "Let the thing be pressed."

One of Col. Bowers's clerks took the laconic message to the telegraph office. He was very much impressed with its forceful brevity and asked the President if he might retain the original as a souvenir. The face of the nation's chief lightened up with a smile as he said:

"I guess, young man, that the document's yours. Possession is nine points of the law, you know."

I want to go outside of my own experiences for a moment to narrate an incident told me by Thomas Wheeler, ex-Mayor and present postmaster of Utica, a member of the fighting 146th New York and a soldier of unquestioned bravery. It is so illustrative of the fatherly kindness of the man that I feel it will well bear a place in these memoirs.

In the early summer of 1864, a very crucial period of the war, young Wheeler, then a lad of 19, was convalescing at Emory Hospital, in the city of Washington, from a serious illness. On a cot next to his was a soldier of a Pennsylvania regiment whose name was Ira Wing. Regularly every week a letter, sometimes two, came from Wing's home, conveying the distressing tidings of his wife's rapidly declining health. She was a victim of consumption and her grip on life was daily weakening. Usually there was attached to each missive a pitiful little postscript in her handwriting, appealing to him to get a short leave of absence that she might bid him good-by before the end came.

The poor chap was unable to read or write, so his comrade read the letters to him, striving at the time as best he could to encourage him with cheering words. But the effort was futile; Wing was disconsolate.

"It was mighty tough," said Wheeler in telling the story, "and the worst of it was there didn't seem to be any relief in sight. We soldiers who were confined in the hospitals weren't privileged to go and come as we willed. We were still enlisted men and couldn't any more leave the capital without leave than we could our regiment in the field. And it wasn't an easy matter to secure permission to visit the city, either. Guards were patrolling the grounds and the streets, and a man in uniform wandering around without a permit generally had some explaining to do.

"Well, you can readily see that Wing was up against it. He tried to get a short furlough and failed. We were strangers in a strange clime, had no commanding officer at hand through whom we could apply and consequently we had to resort to the surgeon of the hospital, who, I imagine, paid about as much attention to such a petition as he did to an attack of toothache.

"It certainly was hard luck. There was the girl back there whom he had sworn to love and protect, and he did love her, wasting away like a late summer rose, and here was he, cooped up like a prisoner, idling away his time when the hours seemed so precious.

"Finally another letter came, and it was a heart breaker. She was worse, much worse, and she was asking for him. What was he to do? What would any one do under the circumstances? Desert—that was about all that was left, and it was desertion that he determined upon. He didn't care for re-sults; he was going home and he was going to see her at all hazards.

"I tried to dissuade him from such a serious offence; he was desperate—and candidly I couldn't blame him. Then I began to figure out some other plan. I had oftentimes heard of President Lincoln's paternal interest in his soldier boys, and the thought occurred to me that if we could only get to him somehow all might be well yet. So I put the proposition up to Ira.

"What, me see Lincoln!" he replied. "We couldn't get within gunshot of him. He ain't bothering with such small fry as us. There's too much on his mind of bigger things."

"I appreciated the probable truth of his remark, but I didn't want to see him court-martialled for desertion; so I kept at him. At last he consented to make the effort; he was willing to do most anything that offered a possible loophole of escape. The hospital steward, Frank McKeezie, was from Utica, and there was therefore a bond of friendship between us. I got a pass from him and the next morning Wing and I started for the White House.

"As I look back at it now the enterprise smacked of the presumption of youth and ignorance. We were two very obscure privates who had no other passport to the Executive Chamber than our extreme necessity, and the chances were strongly against any one examining that passport. The fates, however, were with us.

"We were several blocks from the White House when whom should I see coming down Pennsylvania avenue but tall and ungainly Uncle Abe himself. You couldn't mistake him if you saw him in Egypt. I turned to Wing.

"Here comes the President now. Don't be scared," I suggested, "and when we get up to him you nail him and tell him all about it."

"My advice was good, but he was unequal to the occasion. As we approached the Executive his resolution oozed away like snow before an April sun, and when we were within speaking distance of him Wing was absolutely dumb. He couldn't have spoken a word if his life had depended on it. In the parlance of the day it was strictly up to me. I saluted.

"Mr. President," I said. "He saluted in turn, as he always did when meeting a soldier, and stopped.

"What is it, young man?" he asked. "That was my opening. I screwed my courage to the sticking point and began to plead my case. I told him briefly the circumstances of my companion's plight, of his sickness and convalescence, of the letters that kept coming from home full of sad news about the little woman who, almost in the valley of the shadow, was longing day by day for the presence of her soldier husband. I told him of our effort to secure a leave of absence and our failure and then at last of his determination to desert.

"Mr. Lincoln's eyes, the saddest I have ever seen, seemed to me suspiciously moist as I unfolded to him our predicament; but when I mentioned the word 'desertion' his face took on a most fatherly sternness as, placing his big hand on the shoulder of my wondering comrade, he said:

"My boy, never desert your country in her hour of peril. She needs you and she needs us all. Her life depends upon the loyalty of men like you."

"With that he took him by the arm; the President of the United States, upon whose wearied shoulders were then resting heavily the terrible burdens of that terrible conflict, and the humble private, and together we went to the office of

the Military Governor or Commandant of the city—I am pretty sure that was the department visited. And what do you think 'Father Abraham' did for Ira and the wife? He drew six months back pay and gave it to him, and he got him a month's furlough besides.

"Now," said he in parting, "you home to the woman's who's waiting for you. And if she still needs you why your month is up you let me know and I will see to it that your time extended. I guess the country can spare you to her for a while."

"Poor Wing! He couldn't express his thanks, but he looked it, and was enough. Either of us would have laid our lives at Lincoln's feet after that."

Mrs. Lincoln was at City Point during the last week of March with little Tad. I saw her frequently and somehow gained the idea that she was not of the same homely mould as was her husband. An incident which, at the time, struck me as rather significant of the fact—occurred on the 6th of April, the day after we had returned from Richmond.

On the 1st of April, I believe it was, Mrs. Lincoln had gone to Washington, leaving her son at headquarters. She came back on the 6th, however, on a special boat, with a distinguished party among whom were Senator Sumner and the Hon. James Harlan, Secretary of the Interior, and Mrs. Harlan. They were on their way to the captured city.

I was in the President's tent when Harlan entered and invited Lincoln to accompany them. He declined, saying that he had but just returned from there. Then said Harlan:

"I speak now as the messenger to Mrs. Lincoln. Your presence is desired on board. She wishes you to go with her to Richmond."

Lincoln arose. "If you are a messenger from Mrs. Lincoln," said he firmly, "take this message back from Mr. Lincoln. Tell her that if her boat doesn't start for Richmond in fifteen minutes I'll take the River Queen and go to Washington."

Now what did that mean? I inferred from the remarks and the manner in which he spoke, that it was intended as an ultimatum. I really believe that he considered it a mighty inappropriate time to be running sight seeing excursions to the humbled and stricken capital of the Confederacy. At any rate, he evidently thought that his own return to that city so soon after his departure might be construed as a pleasure trip of idle curiosity. His sensitive nature felt for the defeated South and rebelled against any possible demonstration of vainglory.

Mrs. Lincoln doubtless recognized the alternative reported to her by the messenger the note of decision meant finality, for soon afterward the little party continued the journey.

One telegram sent by President Lincoln from City Point to Secretary Stanton contains a sentence which in the light of subsequent events seems

ant with pathos. I have often read the words and imagined the hopeful, cheerful spirit in which he wrote them.

HEAD QUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES, CITY POINT, April 3, 5 P. M., 1865.

Hon. Sec. of War, Washington, D. C. Yours received. Thanks for your caution; but I have already been to Petersburg, staid with Gen. Grant an hour & a half and returned here. It is certain now that Richmond is in our hands, and I think I will go there to-morrow. I will take care of myself. A. LINCOLN.

"I will take care of myself." And twelve days later Lincoln was dead.

Gen. Winfield Scott was an old man when the war broke out and wholly incapacitated for active service, yet his mature wisdom gained by long experience was an asset of no little moment to the Government in the management and direction of the armies.

When McClellan was placed in command of the Army of the Potomac he flouted the suggestions of his aged superior; for the youthful egotist, swelled mightily by the sense of his vast importance, could brook no man who questioned his omniscience. It might be expected, therefore, that he would scoff at the imbecile Scott and the crude and uncouth Lincoln, who, by some curious defect of comprehension, failed to realize his infallibility. Gen. Scott, naturally sensitive, was hurt by McClellan's disdain. The commander in chief of the Federal forces under direction of the President and Secretary of War, he was deeply wounded by the insolent disregard of his subordinate, who studiously ignored the veteran at Washington. It was perhaps inevitable that one or the other should succumb. And the old warrior gave way. On November 1, 1862, Scott resigned, McClellan succeeding him, to rise and flourish for a while and to fall at length a victim of his own incompetence and conceit.

With General and Mrs. Grant, I attended the commencement exercises at the West Point Military Academy in the spring of 1865. There was a bevy of our young women present and the occasion was one of rare enjoyment. While Grant was upon the field reviewing the regiments, Mrs. Grant and Gen. Scott, who was then a resident of West Point, sat upon the veranda. I was standing a short distance away an interested spectator of the scene. It must have been that the old soldier inquired my identity, for the good lady called to me and introduced me to her companion in highly flattering words. We shook hands; I remember how very soft was the hand that he extended to me and how gently firm was his clasp. He fixed his piercing black eyes upon mine and said in response to my murmured expression of pleasure:

"You can readily see, Mr. Beckwith, that Gen. Grant's confidence is well repoused." Gen. Scott, at this time, was 79 years old (he died the following year), a feeble and broken relic of a once superb manhood. In his prime he stood close to 6 feet and 6 inches in height and weighed 200 pounds. Now he towered above me almost a foot, he was still of massive frame; but he was "in the service" and yellow leaf," wrinkled and worn.

was the salvation of the Union. The fearful blow that had been given the nation in the murder of the President and the attack upon Seward must have been a terrible shock to him, yet throughout all those trying hours, when the passions of men were at fever heat, when suspicion was rife that he himself had been marked for assassination, Grant maintained unbroken his inscrutable reserve. Doubtless he felt as keenly as any of us, probably more than most of us, the irreparable loss the country had sustained, but his innate reticence, his iron will, prevented any outward display.

Abraham Lincoln! Quaint, simple, humble, masterful, truly great; raised up by an omniscient God to lead us through the wilderness of strife, and when we were safely through, taken by Him to receive the reward that is given to them who serve faithfully both God and men. This world will never see a kindlier, nobler, braver, wiser man.

XIII.

The Pursuit of the Assassin.

REMAINED in Washington until the 22d of April, when I was ordered to the lower Potomac to establish communication by telegraph with the War Department and keep the authorities in touch with the several parties that had been detailed to that section to search for Booth, the assassin. It was rumored that he had passed through Maryland in his flight and was somewhere in hiding near Point Lookout, at the mouth of the Potomac River. I left the capital on the river boat Keystone, taking with me as my only companion a Inneman whom I expected to use in tapping and repairing the wire in case of emergency. Pursuant to orders, I made my way to Port Tobacco, a little hamlet on Tobacco Creek in southern Maryland, arriving there at 1 o'clock the next morning, Monday, April 24.

The first thing that I did was to secure lodgings and turn in for a few hours' sleep. After an early breakfast I set out a-horse to find Major James R. O'Beirne, who, with a small command, had been hurried southward soon after the shooting, and who had been prosecuting diligent search for the fugitive. I had proceeded but a short distance when I met the Major returning from a quest which he had conducted with substantial results. We dismounted and he gave me the latest news of the probable whereabouts of Booth and his accessory, Herold. I at once galloped back to the telegraph line, tapped the wire and sent this despatch to Washington:

PORT TOBACCO, Md.,
April 24, 1865—10 A. M.

Major Eckert:

Have just met Major O'Beirne, whose force had arrested Dr. Mudd and Thompson. Mudd set Booth's left leg (fractured), furnished crutches and helped him and Herold off. They have been tracked as far as the swamp near Bryantown, and, under one theory, it is possible that they may be still concealed in swamp, which leads from Bryantown to Allen's Fresh; or in neck of land between Wicomico and Potomac rivers. Other evidence leads to the belief that they

crossed from Swan's Point to White Point, Va., on Sunday morning, April 16, about 9:30 in a small boat, also captured by Major O'Beirne. John M. Lloyd has been arrested and virtually acknowledged complicity. I will continue, with Major O'Beirne, in whom I have very great confidence. We propose first to thoroughly scour swamp and country to-day, and if unsuccessful and additional evidence will justify it we then propose to cross with force into Virginia and follow up that trail as long as there is any hope. At all events we will keep moving, and if there is any chance you may rely upon our making most of it. Country here is being thoroughly scoured by infantry and cavalry.

I feel a pardonable pride in the authorship of this message, although, of course, Major O'Beirne supplied me with the material. It is really of considerable historical importance, because from it the clue was derived which resulted in the capture of the murderer.

Secretary Stanton, promptly upon its receipt, ordered Lieut. E. P. Doherty, of the 16th New York Cavalry, to proceed with all possible speed to Port Tobacco. As fortune decreed, it was Doherty and his men who had the honor of ridding the land of the cowardly fanatic and capturing his companion. But O'Beirne and I did not idly await their coming.

After sending the above telegram, the Major and I with his command rode to Bryantown to take up the track of Booth, if possible, and run him to earth. It wasn't the easiest task in the world to trace the flight of the conspirators.

When we reached the village, we learned after considerable inquiry that Booth and Herold had, within a few hours, called at the home of a Mr. Turner, a country gentleman residing a couple of miles to the north, and asked for food; so we rode out to the house indicated to verify the report. We found that it was true. Two of the servants told us that a hungry looking fellow with an injured leg and crutches and another who answered Herold's description had called at the door that day and begged for something to eat. Upon leaving, they had entered the pine thicket back of the house and disappeared from view.

Here was something tangible to work on. The Major deployed his men and we immediately penetrated the thicket, like a pack of hounds trying to pick up the trail. I was the first to find the telltale clue, the impress of a stick in a portion of soft earth. It was made by the crutch of the wounded Booth, who was hobbling along as best he could, striving to escape the fate that followed him like Nemesis. The track led in a circuitous direction toward a piece of timber, where we lost it and in spite of painstaking endeavor were unable to find it again. If we could only have utilized the services of a trained bloodhound at that time our efforts would have been, I am sure, crowned with success; but we had to depend upon our own astuteness and hence failed.

There was no doubt in the Major's mind, nor in mine either, that Booth was somewhere near by concealed in the underbrush; but his hiding place was too well covered for our discovery.

At half past 1 o'clock on the morning of April 26 I sent a telegram to Major Eckert summarizing our day's labors and suggesting a better system in the

arrangement and employment of the troops who had been assigned to the man hunt. My suggestion, however, was made too late for adoption; the pursuit was ended.

As soon as Lieut. Doherty arrived upon the scene of action I gave him all the information I had, and he and his party had on the same night (the 25th) gone in the direction of Bowling Green, Va. While we were engaged as above described, the lieutenant's detail caught the trail afresh and traced it to the lair. The rest of the story is familiar history.

Thus, while I personally was not with the command that avenged the death of our beloved President, I feel that I can claim the honor of assisting in furnishing the clue that led to the avengement. And the fact that I received \$500 of the reward offered for the apprehension of Booth is pretty good proof of my claim.

Conclusion.

With the garrulity of an old soldier, I presume that I could go on with my narration of events and descriptions of men until I had exhausted the patience of the reader. But I realize that there is a limit to all things as there is to life, which cannot now be far away for me. In the preparation of these memoirs, I have lived again those wonderful years that timed the death struggle of secession and slavery. Before me have passed the mighty armies that are no more. I have seen again their generals and heard them speak. I have been with my old commander, the unconquerable Grant, on his campaigns. I have stood beside the noble Lincoln and looked upon his wan and anxious face. They are gone now and I am done. Permit me to conclude by appending an appreciation of my poor efforts and unwavering faithfulness. When I left the service, Gen. Grant wrote me the following letter. Needless to say, I prize it among my dearest possessions:

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 19th, 1866.

S. H. Beckwith,

DEAR SIR—Now that you are about leaving the service of the United States after more than four years continuous duty, it affords me pleasure to bear testimony to the efficient manner in which you performed your duties.

Enlisting early in the war, as a private soldier, you were, in 1862, if my memory serves me right, detailed in special duty at my headquarters as telegraph operator. Performing your duties faithfully you were discharged in 1863 as a soldier to take employment with the army as operator, and was soon after placed in over all other operators at Headquarters. Soon after the army cipher was intrusted to you. From that time to the close of the rebellion, no reason ever existed for relieving you from the confidential position of cipher operator, thus intrusting to your knowledge every despatch, order and information of such importance as to demand being communicated so that none should know of them but those for whom they were intended, and hence you were continued in your position.

Now that you leave the public for private pursuits, I wish to express my success, and in the position of employee, any capacity to recommend you.

U. S.

I can always recall his face: large and round, with a very broad and full forehead, thick nose and resolute mouth. His eyes, for one so aged, were wonderfully bright and expressive; they seemed the only thing about him that had not gone to decay. His hair was snow white; he wore somewhat exaggerated "sideburns" and a wisp of hair underneath his chin. Verily in the words of the poet:

Ere the pruning knife of time cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the crier on his round
Through the town.

While we were at West Point Gen. Scott presented to Grant a book, one of his own, and upon the fly leaf he wrote these words, which subsequently I read:

"From the oldest to the greatest General of the Army of the United States."

XII.

April the Fourteenth.

THE 14th day of April, 1865, stands black in the calendar of American history; for it marks the commission of one of the most heinous crimes ever perpetrated by man, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

I was in Washington on the day mentioned with Gen. Grant. Arrangements had been made for the attendance at Ford's Theatre in the evening of a distinguished party. The President and Mrs. Lincoln were to occupy a box at the performance of "Our American Cousin," and they had invited the General and his wife to accompany them. The newspapers chronicled the happy tidings and the announcement was greeted with general approval. The war was done; peace for which the country had waited so many anxious and fearful years was at hand. Joy and thanksgiving were manifest everywhere. The people wanted to see these two intrepid leaders, who, above all others, were responsible for the fruition of their hopes. And doubtless both Lincoln and Grant felt the need of diverting relaxation.

But the life of the great soldier, which had been declared forfeited by the conspirators, was spared to the nation for further usefulness. Secretary Stanton, upon learning of the arrangements for the theatre party, promptly registered most strenuous objections to the plan. He had for some months been aware that threats of assassination were being made by certain evil minded persons against the leaders of the Federal Government and army, and, though not giving full credence to the many reports and rumors, he believed that all reasonable measures should be taken for the safeguarding of the lives of the President, his Cabinet and Generals. Secret service agents in Washington and elsewhere had got wind of several suspicious plots that foreboded ill to our eminent officials. Stanton, accordingly, was wary.

Lincoln knew of some of these threats, but he paid little attention to them. He could not figure out how any one would profit by his death; his successor would carry on the work and the tasks before him would be discharged in any event by others. Then, why assassinate him? He made light of his Secretary's fears

and chided him for his lack of faith in human nature. But Stanton was not dissuaded. The presence of the President of the nation and the Lieutenant-General of the armies at any public function at such a critical hour was simply courting disaster.

Gen. Grant was easily persuaded of the indiscretion of such an exposure. As a matter of fact he didn't want to go at all, but had yielded to the President's request to accommodate the Executive. When he learned at the War Department of the fears of Stanton he acquiesced at once in his suggestion that the visit to the playhouse be abandoned; not because of any timidity on his part, but because he wanted to find an excuse for absenting himself from the performance.

On the morning of the 14th, therefore, Grant sent word to the White House that he would withdraw his acceptance of the kind invitation, assigning as his reason that he wished to visit his daughter Nellie, who was attending school in Burlington, N. J. And in the early afternoon the General's party, which included Mrs. Grant and myself, left by rail for the North.

When we reached Philadelphia we left the train and drove to Bloodgood's Hotel. The street was thronged with people and a crowd of men filled the lobby. As we entered and made our way through the throng I felt by the silence that greeted the General and by the stern faces around us that it must be unpleasant news that awaited us. I was about to inquire the cause of the gathering when a man, the night operator I assume he was, stepped forward and handed a telegram to Grant. We walked into the parlor and the three of us, General and Mrs. Grant and I, sat down upon a sofa in one corner of the room. He read the despatch and without comment passed it to his wife, who in turn read it and with an exclamation of painful surprise handed it to me.

I shall never forget the dumb horror of that moment. My heart seemed to leap into my throat. None of us spoke a word. We simply sat there and wondered. Lincoln was shot.

A sudden movement in the crowd attracted my attention. The operator who had delivered the message to Grant raised a finger and beckoned to me and I got up to answer the summons. He took me to one side and pressed into my hand a telegram. It was from Stanton and to me personally. It directed me to have a pilot engine precede our train on its way back to Washington without fall. Was it possible that the Government feared a wholesale attempt upon the lives of our prominent officials? Possibly others besides the President had already fallen beneath an assassin's bullet.

I did not disclose the communication to Grant, for I knew that he would scoff at the order as needless precaution; but I quietly took the necessary steps to carry out the Secretary's injunction.

Before resuming our journey to Burlington I left word at the office to forward to that place immediately any despatches that might come from Washington. I also requested the operator to notify me if he learned of any new developments in the situation.

Upon reaching the New Jersey town I informed Grant that I was going to sit up the balance of the night.

"In case any message comes, General," I said, "I will be right there on the job to receive it, and I can at once bring it to you if its importance is such as to warrant it."

He didn't like the idea. "You had better go to bed," he suggested, "and get some sleep. Let the messages go till morning."

For the first and only time while I was in his service I disobeyed him. I stayed in the telegraph office until 6 o'clock A. M. of the 15th, not knowing what strange events might be happening at the capital; but it was a fruitless vigil; nothing of any interest came over the wire.

After breakfast Gen. Grant, his brother-in-law, Gen. F. T. Dent, and I took a train for Washington. Little was said by any of us during the long hours that followed.

Gen. Halleck met us at the station upon our arrival in Washington (we had now learned of the President's death and of the vicious assault on Seward) and we drove in a closed carriage to the War Department. Grant went at once to Stanton's private office, while Halleck and I remained outside in the corridor. For several minutes the General paced nervously up and down before me, apparently laboring under much worry. At length he paused and, turning to me, said:

"Beckwith, I wish you would warn Gen. Grant against going to Willard's Hotel. That is where he usually stops and it is generally known. He ought to avoid publicity at this time and keep out of danger. There is no telling what might happen to him."

I told him that I thought it would be presumptuous in me to advise the Lieutenant-General as to any course of conduct but that if he desired me to convey a message to Grant. I would gladly do so.

"Then do so," he replied; "give him my warning as a message from me."

When Gen. Grant came from the Secretary's office, I met him and we walked together from the building and toward the White House. I imparted Halleck's forebodings to him in front of the Executive Mansion. He had been walking in thoughtful silence with his eyes upon the ground. Now he looked up at me and said:

"I guess, Beckwith, if they want me, they'll get me wherever I am. We'll go to Willard's."

And go we did. So much for Halleck's fears.

Ever mindful of the anxiety of his family for his welfare, Grant, upon our arrival in the city, had directed me to send a telegram to his wife at Burlington, notifying her of his safety. This I did in the following message:

WAR DEPARTMENT,

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 15, '65.
Mrs. U. S. Grant, Burlington, N. J.:

I am requested by the Lieutenant-General to inform you of his safe arrival. Please inform Mrs. Dent. The President died this morning. There are still hopes of Secretary Seward's recovery.

S. H. BECKWITH.

I have oftentimes since marvelled at the stoicism of this remarkable man, in whose hands peculiarly had been and



Gov. Farwell. Sec. McCulloch. Gov. Oglesby. Gen. Farnsworth. Judge Otto. Speaker Colfax. P. M. Gen. Dennison. Major Jno. Hay. Sen. Sumner. Sec. Usher. Gen. Auger. Gen. Meigs.
Sec. Welles. Vice-Pres. Johnson. Surgeon C. A. Leall. Robt. Lincoln. Mrs. Lincoln. Surgeon O. S. Taft. Dr. Crane. Rev. Dr. Gurley. Sec. Stanton.

Lincoln's Death, April 15, 1865.



Illustration accompanying article: "Capt S H Beckwith, Grant's Shadow, Describes Thrilling Incidents of General's Historic Operations During the Civil War" The New York Sun Sunday, April 27, 1913

"When we reached Philadelphia we went to Bloodgood's Hotel. Crowds filled the lobby and I knew something tragic had happened. General and Mrs. Grant and I went to the parlor and sat on a sofa, when a man stepped forward and handed the General a telegram. He read it and without comment passed it to his wife. Lincoln was shot!"