SHILOH

And the Death of Albert Sidney Johnston by a Member of His Staff—A Sketch

Of Remarkable Interest, Full of Personal Reminiscences and Pervaded by a Warm Affection for

One of the Ablest Commanders of the Civil War—The Career of a Great Soldier.

Having been the aide-de-camp of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, and by his side in the great battle of Shiloh, where he fell, I have been frequently asked by friends to write my personal recollections of the events of the campaign about the time and the principal persons on the Confederate side. This I have delayed rather than declined, because I had no time to spare from the active engagements of life. This reason no longer prevails, because advancing age gives me that leisure denied to my manhood after the destruction of my property in the South. Pretending to no skill as a writer, and being simply a planter, and not bred to arms, I shall not endeavor to enter upon any scientific consideration of the important events about which I write, nor aspire to military or civil criticism, but will rather annuse myself with personal recollections of the most distinguished officers and gentlemen with whom I was associated, or whose friendship I enjoyed while on the staff of Gen. Johnston. It is hoped that these may be not without interest to the desultory reader, and possibly not without profit hereafter to those who may write the history of the civil war. With such a design I have nothing to do further than to say that I was an eye-witness of the facts related, and will endeavor to state very simply my observations of the men who directed the army of the West.

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH ALBERT SIDNEY JOHNSTON

was in the year 1834, when in my early youth I came to the city of Louisville to reside. He was at that time a lieutenant in the regular army, and had gained a distinction in the Blackhawk war, as chief-of-staff of Gen. Atkinson, who commanded the army in that campaign. He had married Henrietta Preston, a lady of Louisville, a woman of great literary culture and attractive accomplishments. She was the daughter of Maj. William Preston, an officer of the army. The union was happy, but she died early. The ennobling influence of her character was felt profoundly by Johnston, who cherished in her years the tender and reverential recollection, the worth and genius of his wife. Above five years after the death of Mrs. Johnston, and after an adventurous life in Texas, before that republic vanished from the ranks of a sovereign state to become a member of the Union, Johnston married Miss Eliza Griffin, who was thought at that time the most beautiful woman in the city. Miss Griffin was a dazzling beauty of Spanish type. Her stature was slightly above the middle size and her form was admirably proportioned. She was a brilliant brunette, and sang and played with great taste and skill, and drew and painted admirably. Evidences of her skill are yet preserved and almost rival the productions of Audubon in their realistic merits.

SECOND MARRIAGE OF THE GENERAL.

Miss Griffin had many suitors among wealthy and intelligent men, and among young men of this city. She was much younger than Johnston, a cousin of his first wife, and the niece and ward of Gen. Hancock. About the time I returned from a tour of several years in Europe, and Johnston used to visit my rooms to enjoy the Sanglitae and Chibouque with my genuine Latakia, the latter of which he was very fond. It suited his calm and reflective character and his natural Turkish gravity, so that, save the name and its academic Scotch physiognomy, a stranger might have mistaken him for a Turkish Pasha, at Damascus, as he smoked a meditative cigarette and light French novels with great interest and undisturbed serenity. Among my *bric-a-brac* was a curious seal, representing Cupid riding on the shoulders of the devil with the motto "*Le Diable est parti Amour.*" I noticed that Johnston was struck with this bauble, and seemed to relish the humor of it. I begged him to accept it, but he declined, saying, however, that he would borrow it for awhile. Not long after he returned the seal to me, announcing, rather slyly, his approaching marriage with Miss Eliza Griffin, and remarking, with a laugh, that my loan had not been without good effect in terminating his courtship successfully. I reminded him of this little matter as Bowling Green some twenty years after, and his bronzed and weather-beaten cheek flushed with pleasure and manly humor at the pleasant recollection.

THE CIVIL WAR.

Years rolled by before I saw Johnston again. After an active and adventurous life he had attained the rank of brigadier-general in the army, while I had pursued the isolated but happy life of a planter in the South. The outbreak of the war led me to Richmond, where I was busy in services in the impending struggle. I had no taste or inclination for the mechanism of tactics, and nothing seemed more comfortable in this world than Harden's tactics, except, perhaps, "Chitty's Pleadings," which I once vainly tried. Under these circumstances Johnston returned from California, and received me with the greatest kindness and friendship. Finding me embarked in the war, he placed me in his staff. And I his aide-de-camp until his death. I received my appointment from his generosity, and I repaid it, not so much by my skill, as by my devotion to my chief. About the time I joined Richmond, just after the battle of Manassas, I met Wade Hampton. I had long known him as a daring bear hunter, accomplished as a horseman in all field sports. I knew him in the wild woods of Mississippi, and had whipped with him the trout streams of the Virginia mountains. Hampton gave me a letter to President Davis, which I delivered in person.

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The first order issued by Gen. Johnston was to Gen. Polk to occupy Columbus, so now to defend the lower Mississippi. This was promptly done. The general and his staff went immediately to Columbus. He desired to study the new question of the ironclad vessels, for the bomb-proofs against them. While we were at Columbus quite an excitement was produced by the approach of two gunboats. The bank opened about two miles distant. The firing was poor and without effect on either side, but there was some boast of damage done in my judgment, it amounted to nothing. A large shell fell near Gen. Johnston and staff, but did not explode. The man seemed to enjoy the joke, and the danger was not trying. As this was my first experience, I only mention it to recall the high spirits of the inexperienced but brave Southern troops. From Columbus we went to Bowling Green. Gen. Johnston stopped at Nashville a few days to confer with Gov. Harris, who had the defense of Tennessee. I never experienced a more thrilling pleasure than in witnessing the heavily-laden railroad trains transporting the little army across the border of Tennessee to reinforce Buckner and repel the Federal army from my native State. The same feeling seemed to animate Johnston, for he stood all night directing the departure of each train in person, and giving the greatest energy to the advance.

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EXAGGERATION OF NUMBERS.

Applications were made frequently by women to go through our lines, which were rarely refused, though sometimes they were ingeniously driven around and through the encampments, which were spread out in the shape of an open fan, so as to mislead them as to our numbers. The exaggeration of our numbers reminds me of an old frittered of mine, a noble and liberal gentleman, Mr. James M. Hewitt, of New Orleans, who, desiring to make a serviceable Christmas present to one of our Kentucky regiments, of which his son was the lieutenant-colonel, came to Bowling Green with 900 overcoats and presented them to the men. Being an old friend of the general's, he was entertained at our mess, and after remaining several days, and binding the general and his staff very patiently on the subject of numbers, he determined to ascertain the facts for himself. We mounted him, and one of the staff was detailed to show him around. The colonels of the different regiments, suspecting the old gentleman's motives, played the same game upon him that we practiced on the ladies before they passed through our lines. After riding nearly all day around and through the army, and making the entire circuit of the lines, he returned about dusk to headquarters and seemed to be perfectly jubilant at the information that he had obtained. He left for New Orleans the next day, where he reported that Gen. Johnston had there by 50 men more than the facts figures would lie, for he had counted the men as well as the tents. The fact was we had less than 15,000 troops enrolled, who were keeping at bay an army of 60,000, under the command of Gen. Don Carlos Buell.

FIDELITY.

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A SPY AND HIS APPEAL.

We had many applications from the student men of my native State for places in the secret service, preferring the risk of being hanged to the dull routine of camp life. On one occasion a gentleman who was a kinsman of one of our greatest military men called at headquarters with the recommendation of Gen. Buckner, and asked to see Gen. Johnston. The general was very busy, and I introduced myself and stated that the gentleman at once disclosed the object of his visit, and I listened eagerly to his recommendation of his own qualifications. He dilated upon the topography of Kentucky, the location of the streams and creeks, his intimacy with many of the old rebel farmers who raised near Buell's army, and concluded with, "I have, too, an admirable Scotch physiognomy, a visage might have mistaken him for a Turkish Pasha, at Damascus, as he smoked a meditative cigarette and light French novels with great interest and undisturbed serenity. Among my *bric-a-brac* was a curious seal, representing Cupid riding on the shoulders of the devil with the motto "*Le Diable est parti Amour.*" I noticed that Johnston was struck with this bauble, and seemed to relish the humor of it. I begged him to accept it, but he declined, saying, however, that he would borrow it for awhile. Not long after he returned the seal to me, announcing, rather slyly, his approaching marriage with Miss Eliza Griffin, and remarking, with a laugh, that my loan had not been without good effect in terminating his courtship successfully. I reminded him of this little matter as Bowling Green some twenty years after, and his bronzed and weather-beaten cheek flushed with pleasure and manly humor at the pleasant recollection.

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