

WITH THE SACRED FLAG SHE LOVES



Float ever, droop never, forever, old flag
 Though the armed world assail you, what coward would lag
 To rise in defense of our beautiful flag?
 By a thousand campfires have the vows of our sires
 Ever been that the flag should still reign;
 And they battled and bled till the rivers ran red,
 But the flag floated free from all stain.
 Let us keep it unfurled to enlighten the world—
 Right's emblem as ages go by.
 Ever glad to the sight is that banner so bright
 As it ripples in glory on high.

—Walter G. Doty, in National Magazine.

AT CLOSE OF WAR

Officer Tells of His Interesting Experience.

Rode into Confederate Lines With Officer Who Brought Flag of Truce From General Lee on Appomattox Field.

AMONG the most interesting stories told of the surrender of the Confederate armies at Appomattox court house, fifty years ago—April 9, 1865—are the eyewitness accounts of Gen. Edward W. Whitaker, who was the chief of staff to General Custer at that time, and who has been a resident of Washington since 1872. Brigadier general by brevet, he was at that time a lieutenant colonel, and the first Union officer to enter the Confederate lines before hostilities were suspended.

That was April 9, 1865, and General Whitaker is the man who accompanied Captain Sims, the Confederate officer who brought out the flag of truce to the point at which were located General Longstreet and General Gordon, who were in active command after the departure of General Lee. General Whitaker was sent with Captain Sims to ascertain if the flag of truce meant "unconditional surrender." General Custer sent word by his chief of staff that unless the flag did mean unconditional surrender he would be unable to stop a charge that was about to be made, as he was not in sole command.

Having received favorable assurances from the Confederate generals, General Whitaker took the flag of truce and at their request rode out to stop the charge of the infantry line of battle, thereby braving the fire of his own side, waiting for the word to engage the enemy.

Resented Yankee's Presence.

"I recall hearing a soldier shout, 'What is the Yankee doing here with his arms on?' General Whitaker said, discussing those historic days with a reporter for the Washington Star. 'The flag of truce,' he said, 'was a fringed honeycomb towel. It is now on exhibition at the New National museum.'

"Lee had gone to the rear to seek Grant," the general continued. "The flag was sent out from the Confederate lines, in charge of Captain Sims, by direction of Lee, the object of the flag being to enable General Longstreet and General Gordon to secure a cessation of hostilities pending negotiations between the commanders regarding the terms upon which Lee would surrender.

"The sloping open fields of Appomattox, glittering for miles with the arms of forces composed of the flower of two of the finest armies that were ever marshaled on earth, seemed designed by nature for the stage upon which should be enacted the last scene in the great drama of the Civil war.

"It was there that the most stirring incident in the bitter struggle occurred, culminating in the announcement to a torn and bleeding nation that peace again was restored.

"It was there that Grant and Lee agreed upon terms for the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia that showed the former to be as magnanimous as a conqueror as he had been relentless as a foe.

"And it was there that the death knell of slavery in the United States of America was sounded and the foundation of a new nation laid whose should arise the substantial structure of the government of today, contributed to equally by the North and the South.

Last Charge on Enemy.

"Our division was composed of three divisions of cavalry, with a battery of light artillery to each brigade. We pressed down upon the enemy and received the fire from battery after battery of artillery without stopping to return it. General Custer, riding at the head of the column, was looking for a favorable opening for a charge. Our movement along the flank of the enemy was slow at first, but the fire of their batteries had nettled our horses into a half trot, when suddenly an officer rode out from the Confederate line waving a large towel in his hand. He said he was Captain Sims of Longstreet's staff, and came by direction of General Lee, who asked a suspension of hostilities.

"In an instant General Custer said to me: 'Whitaker, take this towel, go with this officer to General Lee, with my compliments, and say I cannot stop this charge, as I am not in sole command on this field, unless he announces an unconditional surrender.' I took the towel and asked Sims to show me the shortest cut to where he had left Lee. I remember vigorously swinging the old towel and the relief I felt on entering the Confederate lines without being fired on.

"At the point we entered, only a short distance from where we had left Custer, a battery of artillery was posted, and as we passed the guns I noticed a pile of shells on the ground in the rear of each gun, and every gunner in position ready to give up a warm reception at the command, 'Fire.' On reaching the road, columns of Confederate infantry were moving in perfect order, and I recall hearing a soldier shout, 'What is that Yankee doing here with his arms on?' I had folded the towel out of sight as soon as I reached the Confederate line.

Lee Had Come to Find Grant. "When we arrived at the place where Sims had left General Lee we found only General Gordon and Longstreet, who explained that General Lee had galloped off to the rear to find Grant.

Illinois Woman a Major. Governor Yates of Illinois made the wife of Lieutenant Reynolds (Seventeenth Illinois volunteers) a major. She accompanied her husband through a long campaign, and was present at the battle of Pittsburg Landing. However, she did no fighting, and her commission was a reward for the important service she did in taking care of the wounded.

General Grant immediately after Sims had started out with the flag of truce, and had left them in command. I stated to them the message from Custer to Lee and told them that I must have an immediate reply. They said there was no doubt of surrender, as we had cut off their line of retreat the night before, and that they were personally satisfied of the uselessness of further resistance. I expressed regret that so many good men had been killed the night before and that morning, whereupon they said that General Lee would not believe that the Union infantry was across the Lynchburg pike until the repulse of Gordon's charge, which had been made that morning by his orders.

"While we were talking firing was heard to the east of where I had left Custer, and at my suggestion an officer was sent with orders to stop it. I noticed that the guns that were moving past us as we talked had smoke coming from their mouth, indicating that they were the same that had been used so vigorously on our column a short time before. I protested against the moving of these guns, and was assured that the object was to water the horses in a small creek near by. At this moment General Ord's infantry line of battle was seen closing in on us from the west, and I was begged to announce the surrender of the army to that line.

First Notice of Surrender.

"I saw that there was no time to lose, so I pulled out the old towel again and rode out to the Union infantry line and said to General Chamberlain of Maine that Lee's army had surrendered. The line halted at once and a shout went up from right to left, followed by a scene that words fail to describe. I then galloped back across the field to General Custer to make the same announcement. It was in this way that the infantry historians claim that the surrender was first made to them.

"In conclusion, let me say that of all the battlefields of the Civil war—and I had the honor of being in eighty-one battles—Appomattox was the most magnificent."

Worthy of All Respect.

The survivors of the great war formed an element inextricably interwoven with all that was best in the last two generations of Americans. They were the leading citizens, the pillars of society in every hamlet from Maine to California. Respect for their uniforms and tattered battle flags was taught to our youth by precept and example.

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FIRST TROOPS TO ENTER RICHMOND

Thirteenth Regiment of New Hampshire Volunteers Lays Claim to the Honor.

FOR many years there was discussion of the claims of several bodies of Union troops for the honor of having been first into Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, on April 3, 1865, a few hours, or possibly only an hour, after the last men of the gray had fled out of the city.

The chief claimants for the honor have been the Thirteenth regiment of New Hampshire volunteers, of which John M. Woods, former mayor of Somerville and now department commander of the Massachusetts G. A. R., was a member, and the body of colored cavalry, the Fifth Massachusetts, and that day led by Charles Francis Adams, son of the then minister to England.

There has been much said, and there was much to say, on both sides. The actual priority would seem to belong to the New Hampshire regiment, and some of the facts of the story of that great day are summarized here.

Informal Surrender.

The mayor of Richmond with some of the citizens met General Weitzel a little before seven that morning a little outside the limits of the city. To that point there had advanced a detachment of Union pickets, perhaps 50 to 70 men. Here an informal surrender took place.

Then General Weitzel and his staff proceeded into the city, followed by Lieutenant Prescott and his force of pickets, and preceded by a squad of the general's orderlies from the Fourth Massachusetts cavalry, commanded by Major A. H. Stevens. The general established his headquarters, as is well known, in the house which Jefferson Davis had made the White House of the southern states. James Ford Rhodes says that the evacuation was completed by seven in the morning, and Nicolay and Hay say that Lieutenant Prescott reached capitol square soon after that hour.

General Weitzel soon sent back an aide with orders to get the first brigade he could find and bring it in to act as a provost guard. At the same time he sent word for all the rest of the troops to remain outside the city and take possession of the inner line of Confederate defenses.

Marched into City.

The first brigade met by the aide proved to be Gen. E. M. Ripley's brigade of Gen. Charles Devens' division of the Twenty-fourth army corps. This brigade was headed by Devens, with the New Hampshire regiment to which John M. Woods belonged. They marched into the city between eight and nine o'clock, and between eight and

nine, on a glorious spring morning. Meantime the second order had been sent and carried about, but somehow it failed to reach the regiment of colored cavalry which had then for several weeks been in the command of Colonel Adams. They were posted on the extreme right of the Union line, and they obeyed an earlier request from General Devens and it was the only order of which they knew anything, that they advance into the city, and thus this colored regiment, headed by the grandson of one president and the great-grandson of another, earned for itself a share of the glory of that morning.

General Weitzel himself in his report says:

"At daybreak I started various divisions towards Richmond. General Devens' division came up the New Market road and the cavalry, under Charles Francis Adams, Jr., came up the Darbytown and Charles City roads. I directed them all to halt at the outskirts of the city until further orders. I then rode ahead of the troops, along the Osborne Pike, and entered the city hall, where I received the surrender of the city at 8:15 a. m.

Troops Placed in Position.

"Majors Stevens and Graves had entered a little after 7 a. m. . . . I ordered immediately after my arrival a brigade of Devens' division under General Ripley as provost guard, and ordered all the rest of the troops into position along the inner line of redoubts about the city.

"The first troops to reach the city were the companies—E and H—of the Fourth Massachusetts cavalry, who were the escort to Majors Stevens and Graves, and their guidons were the first national colors displayed over the city. Next came the pickets of the Twenty-fourth corps. After that, as I was in the city and not on the outskirts, I do not know what came, and it is a matter of dispute, both divisions claiming the credit."

Wherever the credit goes it will fall somewhere in New England, and probably upon New Hampshire for priority, and Massachusetts will have a full share.

Foiled Enlisting Officers.

They tell a tale of an amusing incident that occurred at a recruiting headquarters in Indiana, where an old man with flowing gray beard and white hair offered himself as a soldier. Of course, he was rejected. He said nothing, but hastening to a barber shop, had his hair dyed and a clean shave. Then he came back, declaring his age as "rising thirty-five," was unrecognized and promptly enlisted.

Illinois Woman a Major.

Governor Yates of Illinois made the wife of Lieutenant Reynolds (Seventeenth Illinois volunteers) a major. She accompanied her husband through a long campaign, and was present at the battle of Pittsburg Landing. However, she did no fighting, and her commission was a reward for the important service she did in taking care of the wounded.

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