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VOL. 7.

CAIRO, ILLINOIS, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 1875.

NO. 152.

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The Bulletin.

TALKING WILLIAM.

What Gen. Sherman Said to a Newspaper Man.

(From the St. Louis Times.)

Since the appearance of General Sherman's memoirs, a number of persons have published cards or made individual notices objecting to certain of the conclusions. An editorial writer in the St. Louis Times expressed to some of the staff officers his desire to converse with General Sherman on some of these topics. Yesterday, while visiting headquarters, the general entered the room where our associate was seated, and answered so freely and frankly a number of leading questions put to him, that we give there no reluctance in transcribing a part of the conversation. What is called the interview is frequently an unfortunate method of representing a person to the public, still it is a popular way of introducing a subject directly to the audience. These interviews are generally at fault in the transposition of part of the conversation so that a man is made to broach a topic deliberately, whereas, what he said merely grew up the line of talk. We shall endeavor in what follows to preserve a part of Gen. Sherman's method and still leave out collateral matter.

Let our reader at a distance, therefore, behold the headquarters of the United States army at the corner of two leading streets of St. Louis, midway between the business portion of the city and the best residential portion. A fine brick house, a little higher than most, with high ceilings, cool rooms, tall windows, cool matting on the floors and the furniture all moved out from the abandoned headquarters in Washington. A flagstaff in the middle of the building is the only indication of its military character. Generally there is a corporal around the door in half dress, who is instructed to be as much of a civilian as possible; for Gen. Sherman represents the citizens of the country, a perfect Democrat, direct behavior, making a short cut to whatever object he moves toward, and his conversation is apt, free, luminous, startling, illogical, and still quaint, humorous and practical.

"General," said our interlocutor, "your book and the Beecher trial fill the whole of my curiosity now. What do you think of your critics?"

"Well, said General Sherman, "I am amused at how much is said about my book by people who evidently have not read it. I am glad the Beecher trial is on, it that relieves my little performance from a part of its notoriety. I wrote that book as freely as I can. It is my opinion that the prominent officers of the war ought to set down without fear their remembrances of the contest; for while there have been several histories, and some good ones, there never will be a perfect history of that contest until the main actors jot down their ideas. Now, I have been an advocate of publishing all the material the government has at Washington, much of which has never been issued. There are numbers of official reports of leading battles which have never yet got out. I think General Sherman, for example, could not afford to write a book. He is a practical soldier and good writer, and his reports read first rate. General Grant's life and campaigns, written by Buel, have fallen sort of still born because the author was too particular and wanted to be official or nothing. I had no intention of writing my book of being unjust or harsh, but I cannot blame myself for anything I have said, because I do confess to feeling and seeing vividly."

"General, don't you apprehend that after all the best history of the war will be that of the Count De Paris?"

"I think it very probable," said Sherman. "He has taken up the subject with more breadth and forethought than anybody else. But those fragmentary sketches on me for something or other, or nothing in particular, are only half considered. For instance, I have a letter from Montgomery Blair backing down on his card. Now, I'll tell you what I think about the man. He is a bold, chivalrous fellow, but the rest of them are a peculiarly selfish race. Montgomery is very selfish. I do not propose in treating of such people to be very fine. Now, there is Joe Johnston. He was always an envious man. He was a brave, handsome soldier, but he was short here."

"The general tapped his brains significantly, and continued:

"When I can get an author and write a book for the use of the country, I should be unjust to my readers if I did not put down just what I think about Hooker."

"Gen. Sherman, was not Don Carlos Buell a soldier of ability?"

"Breededly," said Sherman, "he was a good disciplinarian and had a very good knowledge of his art. He belonged, however, to that class of Generals who evade bloodshed, thinking that a display of force would be as efficient as the use of it. He always came slowly into action; he would sit in his tent sometimes in the rear portion of his army engaged, and there was no particular about him. I regard Buell as the McCall of the war, a man of whom it was expected who had most sympathy, and who still failed to produce results."

"General, was Buell slower than Thomas?"

"Much slower," said Sherman. "Thomas was as deliberate, but he meant battle when he came up. Buell was the tardiest and most tantalizing man to move into action that I ever saw. He came on the field at Shiloh in echelon. It was a beautiful movement, and only a master of the art can perform it with success. He began to tell me about how many men he saw back on the river skulking; but I told him: 'General, there are no soldiers in the world who could have behaved better than these men out here did. We probably have fifteen or eighteen thousand men still on the battle field who have never flinched.'"

"Well, general, to what do you attribute Buell's discomfiture and investigation by a court of inquiry?"

"Well, sir," said Sherman, "Grant and myself received most abuse after Shiloh and Buell was correspondingly advanced. He commanded the center of the army at Corinth and onward. Bragg marched straight for St. Louis parallel with Buell, and then on the retreat the battle of Perryville came up, when Buell allowed McCook's corps to take the whole day's use of it. He was a man of whom it was expected who had most sympathy, and who still failed to produce results."

of men who would fight at any and all times."

"General Sherman, do you mind giving an estimate of Grant as you appreciate him?"

"General Grant," said Sherman, "is as good an example of the American-born, American-bred standard man as this country can show. He has the wonderful gift of reflection, and he had it during the war as much as since. He is generally just to his fellow-officers. On the battle field he displays common sense in every extremity. He went into the war with a devil of a bad staff, but he stuck to the most around him because they had been his friends in the days of his poverty. After awhile he changed that staff, and there was a great improvement. Rawlins was a smart fellow, but awfully over the country. But Grant was drunk at the battle of Shiloh. I saw him at half-past ten and at half-past four that day, and he was cool as a cucumber and straight as a string. I don't believe that Grant was ever as drunk as he was after the battle of Shiloh is a lie. I believe it can be proved that he could get nothing to get drunk on, and I know from contact that he was sober."

"General Sherman," continued our questioner, "what rank does the battle of Shiloh have amongst the battles of the war?"

"It was the turning point of the war," said the general, "the troops of the West and North acquired the spirit of confidence on the field of Shiloh which made all our Western campaigns successful."

"Were the troops of any particular State, General?"

"No, sir, I think that the American soldier, particularly in the West, is naturally a determined, superb fighter. The battle of Shiloh has been badly related to the people. General Grant showed there the finest fighting of his life. We had to replenish our ammunition four times, and every time there was a call for it the fixed ammunition was provided. I saw men riding up late in the afternoon with their arms full, and they would drop the shell on the ground."

"Did the rebels fight well at Shiloh?"

"Yes, sir. They hardly kept up the appearance of skirmishes. They struck us in fixed line of battle, and fought like tigers. I saw their colonels with the naked eye on the flags from the standard-bearers and rush up and plant them and there would be a clump of men collected around each standard until, under our terrific fire, they seemed to melt out of the air. The laughter of the West, was fearful. As they advanced our soldiers would wait until they got in, minding distance and then give them hell."

"General Sherman, who was the principal genius of the Confederacy in the Western field?"

"Oh, Joe Johnston," said Gen. Sherman. "He was a cunning, subtle fellow. Albert Sidney Johnston was more of a Kentuckian, and had a fine, inspiring presence on the battle field. We fell in our lines, without knowing much about it, the effect of his death. There was a lull in the battle. He had been killed and Beauregard could not be found."

"General Sherman, did you ever come across Pat Cleburne?"

"Oh, yes," said Sherman. "Pat was a wonderful man. He was a native of the province of Kentucky when he was killed. If there had been another year of Cleburne and the war, he would have left one of the greatest reputations in the southwest. A man somewhat like him in cool fighting ability, was Morgan L. Smith, of St. Louis, one of my regimental officers. Smith was at Shiloh and he came over and introduced himself and wanted to take a battery. Said I: 'No; you lay low and they will feel for you directly, and then you give 'em hell.' In a little while I heard the devil's own noise down in the ravine where Smith was. After an hour or so, he came over to me with his leg thrust over his saddle-bow, and he said: 'General, they did come and I gave 'em hell, too.'"

"Well, sir," said the interlocutor to Sherman, "how do you like St. Louis compared to Washington, for headquarters?"

"Why, there is no comparison. The reality and substantiality of living here are incomparably better than the petty advantages of Washington society. Our officers here are in an almost beggarly condition. I have known them to die in that city and immediately biting want visited their families. Desiring to bring up my children to be useful men and women, I came to St. Louis, for I knew well enough that they could never be such in Washington. Good luck attends every diligent man in St. Louis. The class of men I used to know here who have stuck to their business have almost invariably made successful citizens."

General Sherman starts to-day (Sunday) for Banker Hill, to be present at the centennial anniversary of the great battle there. He will be accompanied by General Miles and two officers of his staff. He will stay in St. Louis most of the summer, while his family will be quartered at the place on Lake Michigan. The staff is composed of only six officers, who will be reinforced in a few days by General McCook, a resident of Dayton, Ohio. Col. Audenreid is collecting at headquarters a military library.

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