

GEN. STONEMAN AND HIS PRISONER.

A Thrilling Incident of the War.

In the early spring of 1865, just before the final surrender of Lee and Johnston, General Stoneman, with a division of federal cavalry, pushed his way from East Tennessee through the range of mountains separating Tennessee and North Carolina, in a movement made to cooperate with Sherman's advance from South Carolina. He expected no serious opposition until after the barrier of the Blue Ridge had been passed, at the foot of this range of mountains in the manufacturing village of Patterson in North Carolina. Here was situated the only cotton mill in a radius of near one hundred miles, and it was run to its utmost capacity, day and night, to supply cotton thread and "domestic" cloth for a large portion of the Carolinas, Tennessee, Virginia and Kentucky.

The mills at Patterson were of such serious importance that their protection required constant vigilance; and there were in the vicinity—kept almost constantly there—squads of what in the local parlance were called "Home Guards," men exempt from the confederate conscription.

About the mills could be seen at all times then, wagons and teams of citizens and traders from the surrounding territory; it was not unusual to find buyers there from a distance of more than a hundred miles in north or westerly directions.

The day before Stoneman's arrival at Patterson, his scouts and spies had been in the village. Conflicting accounts were given him about the "soldiers" or home guards around. The factory women reported that "many soldiers had been seen near." These were the furloughed men of the South going to and from their homes.

The day the General arrived there had come, just in the advance and not suspecting the federal cavalry in his rear, a lame and stammering man, well known throughout the whole region. His name was Osborne. He had with him a valuable wagon and team. For his "protection" he always kept with him a sagacious and strong dog and a good shooting pistol. It should be remembered here, that there were, about the time referred to, bands of plunderers known as "Vaughan's Men," who were constantly prowling through this region. They were the stragglers and outliers from a brigade of confederate cavalry. These marauders, away from their officers, robbed friend and foe alike. The Southern people had begun to dread these skulkers and plunderers as much as they did another band of thieves and robbers, who, refusing to enter either army, federal or confederate, yet availed themselves of the license of war and the absence of authority and law in the State, plundered the confederate sympathisers with remorseless hand. They were variously known as "Tories," "Bushwhackers" and "The Robbers." It often occurred that robberies were made in the night time, and it was difficult to tell whether the villains were "Vaughan's Men" or "The Robbers." The Southerners hated the one no less than the other. This much is necessary to explain the action of Osborne in the incident to follow. Osborne was "intensely Southern."

The man was encamped at Patterson when the federal cavalry arrived. The advance guard rode into town just after dark, and no one knew exactly "what was up"—in the language of the town. But a report at once reached Osborne that "The Robbers" were upon the citizens. He hastened to his wagon: when he reached it his faithful dog within was barking furiously at some one endeavoring to get into the front opening of the wagon "body." Osborne, seeing the man, took out his pistol, attempting to drive the man away and supposing him to be one of the band of robbers.

The stranger ran out into the dark a few steps and fired a shot back at Osborne. Immediately a cry arose, "One of our men is killed!" Instantly some cavalymen rushed toward the wagon and struck Osborne several blows over the head and shoulders with their sabres—one cut severing his ear almost completely from his head.

Although a cripple, badly lamed from the effects of "white swelling," Osborne managed to make his escape, running to-

ward the main factory building, which was faintly lighted up. As he fled a soldier with a carbine fired a shot at him. The fugitive was not a rod away; the shot struck him and Osborne fell at once to the earth, uttering a horrible groan.

"Now!" said the soldier with an oath. "He'll run no further!"

Osborne, however, had fallen into the shadow of one of the walls, and could not be immediately found. But the report ran at once to General Stoneman, who by this time had gotten upon the scene of action, that a citizen was killed.

The man was not killed. He had been well nigh fatally struck; and so close to the muzzle of the firing piece had he been that his clothing was on fire, and he was in danger of being burned to death.

He crawled into the building and begged an operative to put out the fire which was by this time ablaze in his apparel. The workmen had a double fright—the shooting on the outside, and the man on fire on the inside of a cotton mill, and in the "lap room," where the danger was double—and the whole event transpiring almost in the twinkling of an eye and so suddenly that the inmates of the mill did not know they were surrounded by the army in blue.

The cotton man drove Osborne from his room. He (Osborne) went to the outer door, and there he saw the guns of the soldiery awaiting him. He wheeled about, running through the main building towards the garret of the mill, the soldiers pursuing him.

By this time the lights in the upper story had been extinguished, and as Osborne was familiar with his surroundings, he had an opportunity to find a place of concealment on the roof of a mill.

The soldiers got a candle and made diligent search for him within the building. Failing to find the man therein, the men were so enraged they swore they would discover him with fire if nothing else could produce him. Whereupon they stuck the candle in a lot of cotton waste on the floor, and immediately descended to the ground below.

There were two alternates that were now left to the man: One was to get down and out of the building, and that quickly or else perish in the flames.

There was a lightning rod running from the roof to the ground, and as quick as a flash he thought of descent down it. He cut the tops from his boots at once, and made cushions for his hands, fearing that in the downward slide the friction would burn him in that effort. It was a perilous project, however; and yet this might fail him; for would he not then become, in the descent, a conspicuous mark for the aim of the enraged soldiery?

A revelation befriended him. He saw that the flames beneath him in the cotton were making slow headway, and so he had time for reflection. His decision was that he would cry for mercy, that he would beg for quarter, and appeal in every way he possibly knew of.

He shouted to the frenzied crowd gathered below—to the troops who were under the false impression that a comrade had been fired upon from the building. He cried loudly that he was a citizen and wanted to surrender.

When he came down, he was at once recognized as the man who had drawn, but not fired his pistol upon a soldier. He was instantly struck by several of the soldier's comrades. Whereupon he gave in an emphatic manner, what is known as the "sign of distress" among the masonic fraternity. He shouted it aloud, in terms honest, vigorous, earnest, frantic. Standing by an adjacent light was an officer looking over a military map. He heard the prisoner's cry of distress, and he at once plunged through the mass of soldiery, around the man; and with the loud command of authority shouting, "Hold there! Let him alone! Touch him not!"

Instantly the soldiers obeyed, and the prisoner stood trembling and bleeding and for all the world like a frightened hare in the captor's hands.

"Come with me!" said the officer, and he led Osborne away. Several times in the egress through the crowd gathered around, there were shown dispositions to give him further violence; but the decisive tones of the officer in charge set at naught all the efforts at further

harm.

The prisoner was soon before General Stoneman, who was quartered in the house of Mr. Patterson, the owner of the mill.

"Here is the man, general" said the officer with the prisoner.

"I thought he was reported killed," replied General Stoneman, somewhat astonished.

"No, he has surrendered. He is hurt and asks for protection."

The general directed that the wounds be dressed, and that the man be placed in comfortable quarters till morning, when he would see him again.

Next morning Osborne was ordered to report to the general. When he had come again into his presence, he made his statement—that he was simply a trader, exempt from military service in consequence of his affliction, that he had presumed to offer resistance under the sincere conviction that he was not confronting regular soldiery, but the common enemy, the public robber, known to General Stoneman himself to be in the country. He showed the sabre and gun scars and cuts over head and face. The bullet the soldier had fired at him had cut through six thicknesses of leather holding his cartridges, had gone through all his clothing besides, and was lodged against the skin near the spinal column; it had knocked him down, severely stunning him; while the fire of the gun, and from the explosion of his own cartridge, had burned him seriously. (It was the explosion of these cartridges doubtless that created the impression upon the soldiers that they were being fired upon from the shadow of the building where the man lay after having been struck down.) Osborne's left ear was quite gone; but a surgeon's skill had partially saved it.

General Stoneman heard the man's story. He then directed that there be restored to him all his effects, wagon and team, including also the faithful dog that had so jealously guarded the contents of the wagon during the night, and whose fidelity to his charge had been so appreciated by the soldiers, that they spared his life.

Twenty odd years have passed since these events, and the man Osborne, for the first time since, has revisited the scene of his thrilling escape. From his own lips I have the story I have written for your readers. For four years I was myself a soldier, encountering during the period many thrilling and hair breadth escapes, but none more deserving a place in literature than this episode in the life of a civilian.

Auburn, Ala.

Wonders of the Dead Sea.

One of the most interesting lakes in the world is the Dead Sea, which has no visible outlet. It is not mere fancy that has clothed the Dead Sea in gloom. The desolate shores, with scarcely a green thing in sight, and ragged driftwood, form a fitting frame for the dark, sluggish waters, covered with a perpetual mist, and breaking in slow, heavy, sepulchral-toned waves upon the beach.

It seems as if the smoke of the wicked cities was yet ascending up to heaven, and as if the moan of their fearful sorrow would never leave the God-smitten valley.

It is a strange thing to see those waves, not dancing along and sparkling in the sun, as other waves do, but moving with measured melancholy, and sending to the ear, as they break languidly upon the rock, only doleful sounds.

This is no doubt owing to the great heaviness of the water, a fact well known, and which we amply verified in the usual way, for, on attempting to swim, we went floating about like empty casks.

That fish cannot live in this strong solution of bitumen and salt is too obvious to need proof; but to say birds cannot fly over it and live, is one of the exaggerations of travellers, who perhaps were not, like ourselves so fortunate as to see a flock of ducks reposing on the banks in apparently good health.

And yet this was all the life we did see. The whole valley was one seething caldron, under more than a tropical sun. God-forsaken and man-forsaken, no green thing grows within it, and it remains to this day as striking a monument of God's fearful judgment as when the fire from heaven devoured the once mighty cities of the plain.

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