

it up and retired, for we had a perfect division behind our high and heavy entrenchments. If he had tried by dividing his forces to attack at that point and also on the flank we would have advanced from our works and by assaulting his troops in our front compelled him to bring the flanking forces to aid them and then we would have beaten his entire command."

GENERAL HOKE'S ESTIMATE OF LEE

General Hoke went on to say about General Lee: "A notable thing about our great commander was his instant readiness to listen to any plan for fighting or doing anything to the enemy which had merit and good sense behind it, for his grasp of military matters and strategy was so complete that he knew at once what was good and if his judgement showed him the plan had value the officer who suggested it might feel sure that at the first opportunity it would be put to the test. I know General Lee did this very thing a number of times. I wish to say that General Lee had wonderful quickness of eye and could inspect troops of any branch of any service, or even as they marched past in review, and observe any defects; such things as a horse without a shoe, the shortage of some article of equipment carried by a soldier, or if a piece of artillery harness had been tied with a string. General Lee loved to fight, in spite of the gentleness of his life and his profound Christian spirit, and surely no man was braver. His plans of battle are fit studies for any tactician."

THE CAPTURE OF PLYMOUTH

General Hoke would have been a lieutenant general had the war continued a little longer. One of his most important acts was the capture of Plymouth, an important town on the Roanoke River, not far from the North Carolina coast. He told General Lee that if he could take his division from the army of Northern Virginia to Plymouth and have the Confederate ram Albemarle aid him, he could capture the place. So his division was ordered to Weldon, N. C., and from there it marched to Plymouth, the Albemarle, which had been built in a cornfield beside the river, not far below Weldon, meantime going on down the stream and nearly destroying the Federal fleet. While this combat on the water was in progress Hoke assaulted the town and captured General Wessels and all of his troops, over 8,000 in number, together with a vast amount of supplies of all kinds, which were immediately sent to General Lee.

AN UNWRITTEN CHAPTER OF HISTORY

For this capture of Plymouth General Hoke received the thanks of President Davis and General Lee, the congratulations of all the prominent officers and the thanks of Congress. This action and other things which General Lee had observed brought to Hoke an honor which is memorable. One day in the autumn of 1864, while Lee and Hoke were riding together along the James River, General Lee suddenly said to the North Carolina officer that he wished to give him some special information and then, to Hoke's utter astonishment informed him that he had notified President Davis and the Confederate Cabinet that in case he was killed or disabled in any way Hoke was

to take his place in command of the army. General Hoke demurred, saying there were many officers much his seniors in age, length of service and ability, but General Lee quietly but firmly told him that all this was settled and that his plans were definite and not to be changed.

After the war General Hoke turned his attention to the details of civil life, burned all his war papers and put behind him everything relating to his service in the Confederate Army, saying that the war was over. In 1867 he married the beautiful Miss Van Wyck, two of whose brothers became very prominent judges in New York. The general has been interested in mining and railway development and has prospered exceedingly. He was the principal owner and head of the Cranberry Iron Mines for a number of years and some twenty years ago planned a railway from near the North Carolina line at Monroe to Atlanta as an important link in the Seaboard Air Line, the distance being something like 400 miles. General Hoke attired himself in the garb of the every-day countryman, put on a big felt hat, mounted a heavy horse, rode all along the line of the proposed road, in his modest way, always so effective, making friends everywhere and securing rights of way almost without cost, built the road and later it was turned over to the Seaboard Air Line. General Hoke has never taken any part whatever in politics, and has never attended a Confederate reunion. His admirers are of all parties. Though an ardent ex-Confederate he is yet broadly and vigorously National.

THE UNKNOWN HERO

On one occasion, the year after the war, he happened to be at West Point Military Academy, with his quick eye saw everything worth seeing in the finest military school on earth. He dropped in one of the recitation rooms and found an instructor lecturing on rapid marches by troops, citing as one of the finest examples during the Civil War a march made by Hoke's division. The general heard this but did not make himself known and walked out as quietly as he had entered. He never wrote a newspaper article except one about Lee. To the writer he gave the only statements regarding himself in the Civil War which he has ever made. His Summer home was at Lincoln Lithia Springs, a place which he had owned for a number of years and where he established a delightful colony, his Winter home being at Ralieggh. He was in truth a typical American; soldier once, gentleman always. During the war his first thought was of the health and comfort of his men and this is the cause of the intense affection which the survivors of his division exhibited for him. Stately in figure, with snowy white hair, erect and showing the soldier in every step, General Hoke was a man to be taken note of anywhere, and his wide range of information and acute intellect, in spite of his seventy-five years, made conversation with him delightful. He could give no end of reminiscence of the Civil War, and yet no man on either side in that conflict was so reticent; not even General Grant, that "Master of Silence."

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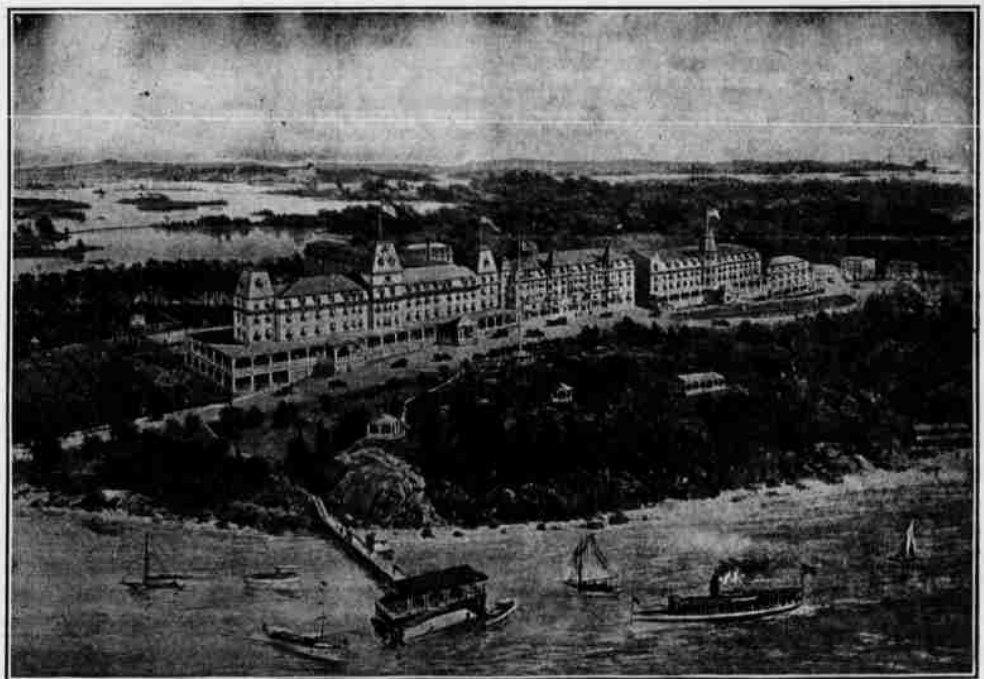
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