

GRANT AND LEE.

The Interesting Story of Appomattox Retold.

On the night of April 2, 1865, Gen. Lee ordered the evacuation of Petersburg. The movement was conducted with wonderful address, and the march being pushed vigorously all night, Lee's army, now reduced to 25,000 men, had by dawn put sixteen miles between it and Petersburg. On April 3, a squad of Federal cavalry rode into Richmond without molestation, and thus the Confederate capital fell. When morning revealed the flight of Lee's army, Grant made haste to follow. Pursued and pursued by parallel lines, Lee by the north side of the Appomattox and Grant by the south bank, in a southwesterly direction. It was Lee's desire to reach the mountains, in the fastnesses of which he hoped to recruit the strength and spirits of his army. It was a terrible race for life. The Confederates began the retreat with but one ration, and the country through which they passed had no supplies. Hundreds of men dropped from exhaustion and thousands left their muskets from inability to carry them any further. When night came, exhausted divisions sinking in the woods for a few hours' repose would hear suddenly the boom of hostile guns, and they had to rise and hasten away as fast as their weary limbs would carry them.

It was Lee's hope to reach the Danville Railway at Amelia Court-House, concentrate at that point, then fall back southward to Danville and make a junction with the army of Joseph E. Johnston. It was the determination of Grant and Sheridan that he should do no harm of the kind. Lee expected Grant to follow on his track; Grant decided to race and head him off. At Amelia Court-House Longstreet, Gordon, and Ewell united their wearied and hungry troops. Here was the railway, but where were the hoped-for supplies? Sheridan had seized the road ten miles to the southwest of them and held and barred the way. Meade was but a short distance behind him; Grant, with Ord and the Twenty-fourth Corps farther to the south, along the South-side railway. Lee found that he could not reach Danville; but there was another hope: Lynchburg, fifty miles west—Lynchburg and the neighboring mountains. Thither he turned his weary eyes, and with Sheridan hanging to his bleeding flanks and worrying the column over every mile of road, the Southern leader strove to keep his men together and still push ahead. Almost every hour he had to turn and fight; first on one side, then on the other, in front, flank, and rear; small detachments of cavalry leaped upon his batteries or trains, lopping off a few guns, a score of wagons, or a hundred prisoners at ever cross-road, while behind him and on his left pushed relentlessly ahead the now enthusiastic infantry of the Army of the Potomac. Night and day, for five successive days, it was one vehement, never-relaxing pursuit, varied only by the savage combats that attended Lee's every halt for breath. At Sailor's Creek, at Farmville, at High Bridge, where again they strode along the banks of the Appomattox, there was bloody fighting; but never could the Southern General shake off the death-grip of Sheridan. He had fully forty thousand men at Amelia on the 5th, and at least one-fourth of these were gone when his staggering column pushed on for the last march of all—April 8. He had succeeded in crossing to the north side of the Appomattox now, leaving Ewell's corps, with Ewell himself, Kershaw, Custis Lee, Dubose, Hunton, and Corse as prisoners, a loss of fully eight thousand men sustained in one day; and now, with Humphreys and Wright close behind him on the north side, and Sheridan's cavalry, Ord, and Griffin's corps on the south side and even with his leading columns, Lee was striking for Appomattox Court House, where supplies were awaiting him. On the 7th Grant had written a few words to Gen. Lee, pointing out the hopelessness of further resistance, and asking his surrender, as the only means of avoiding further bloodshed. Lee replied that he did not regard his position as hopeless, but inquired what terms would be offered. On the 8th Grant had offered most lenient terms—the mere disqualification of all surrendered officers or men from again taking up arms until properly exchanged; but Lee still hoped to escape. He counted on getting those supplies at Appomattox, and then breaking for Lynchburg, only a long day's march away, and he declined. This correspondence was really conducted on the run, for both armies were pushed to the utmost in the race. But Lee stopped twice on the 7th and 8th to fight Humphreys, who was clinging to the rear with a grasp that threatened to pull him to earth, and the delay was fatal. Stopping for nothing, Sheridan's cavalry shot forward along the lower road, sprang upon the railway station beyond the Court House, Custer's troopers rode in among the coveted trains, and long before the morning of the 9th had whistled every vestige of supplies out of sight; brigade after brigade came trotting up from the southeast, and deploying its skirmish lines up the Richmond road toward the Court House, five miles away, whither Custer had already driven the rebels. The General, however, soon adverted to the object of the interview. "I asked to see you, Gen. Grant," he said, "to ascertain upon what terms you would receive the surrender of my army." Grant replied that the officers and men must become prisoners of war, giving up of course all ammunition, weapons, and supplies, but that a parole would be accepted binding them to go to their homes and remain there until exchanged or relieved by proper authority. Lee had expected some such things as these and made some other remarks not exactly relevant. Whereupon Grant inquired: "Do I understand, Gen. Lee, that you accept these terms?" "Yes," said Lee, "and if you will put them into writing I will sign them."

Grant then sat down to the little table and wrote the following letter:

APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE, April 9, '65.

Gen. R. E. Lee, Commanding C. S. A.:

In accordance with the substance of my letter to you of the 8th inst., I propose to receive the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on the following terms, to wit:

Rolls of all the officers and men to be made in duplicate, one copy to be given to an officer designated by me, the other to be retained by such officer as you may designate.

The officers to give their individual paroles not to take arms against the United States until properly exchanged, and each company or regimental commander sign a like parole for the men of the command.

The arms, artillery, and public property to be packed and stacked, and turned over to the officers appointed by me to receive them. This will not embrace the side-arms of the officers, nor their private horses or baggage.

This done, each officer and man will be allowed to return to their homes, not to be disturbed by United States authority so long as they observe their parole and the laws in force where they may reside. Very respectfully, U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant General.

Grant had started for Sheridan's front at an early hour, and this communication was sent by the way of Meade's command. It, therefore, did not reach him, the General-in-chief, until nearly midday. He immediately replied: "Your note of this date is but this moment (11:50 a.m.) received. In consequence of my having passed from the Richmond and Lynchburg Road to the Farmville and Lynchburg Road, I am at this writing about four miles west of Walter's Church, and will push forward to the front for the purpose of meeting you. Notice sent to me on this road where you wish the interview to take place will meet me." This note was carried forward by Col. Babcock, of Grant's staff, who passed the enemy's pickets, and was conducted to Lee. The great rebel was sitting by the roadside, under an apple tree, surrounded by his officers, but he immediately mounted and rode forward to select the place for the interview, in accordance with the suggestion of Grant. First, however, he desired to send a message to Meade. He had been so anxious to avoid any further fighting that he had requested of Meade, as well as Sheridan, a cessation of hostilities, and Meade, as well as Sheridan, at first declined to receive the proposition, declaring that he had no authority, but finally agreed to a truce until 2 p.m., by which time it was supposed the Generals-in-chief

would have met. Lee informed Babcock of this arrangement, and requested that word might be sent to Meade, and the truce extended. Babcock accordingly wrote a line to Meade, notifying him of the circumstances and requesting him to maintain the truce until positive orders from Gen. Grant could be received.

But the hours were passing, and the distance to Meade's headquarters, around the national front, was nearly twelve miles, while through the rebel army it was not more than two miles, and in his anxiety lest the fighting should recommence Lee now volunteered to send an officer through his own lines with the message to Meade. Babcock's note was accordingly transmitted in this way by Gen. Forsyth, of Sheridan's staff, escorted by a rebel officer.

Lee then rode on to the village of Appomattox and selected the house of a farmer named McLean for the interview with Grant. Information was at once sent back to Sheridan's headquarters, not half a mile away, where the cavalry leader was impatiently awaiting the arrival of his chief. Firing, of course, had ceased, and Sheridan was at the very front with a handful of officers.

AT GRANT'S MERCY.

Aware that Grant now held the remainder of the Army of Northern Virginia in his grasp, and indignant that Lee should have continued to fight after he had proposed to surrender, the national trooper was inclined to consider the rebel overture a ruse intended only to gain time to escape. He was pacing up and down in a little farm-yard like a prisoner in a cage when the General-in-Chief arrived and assured him of the truth that Gen. Lee, finding himself circumvented and surrounded, had indeed expressed a willingness to surrender.

A few words from Sheridan explained the situation in his front, and made Grant aware how completely the rebel leader and the fragments of the rebel army were at his mercy. With the Army of the Potomac on the north and east, and Sheridan and Ord on the south and west, the enemy that had withstood, and repelled, and averted, and avoided Grant so long was absolutely in his power. He proceeded at once to the interview.

The two armies came together in a long valley at the foot of a ridge, and Appomattox was on a knoll between the lines which could be seen for miles. The McLean house stood a little apart, a plain building with a veranda in front. Grant was met by Lee at the threshold. There was a narrow hall and a naked little parlor containing a table and two or three chairs. Into this the gentlemen entered, each at first accompanied by a single aide-de-camp, but as many as twenty national officers shortly followed, among them Sheridan, Ord, and a number of Grant's own staff. No rebel entered the room but Lee and Col. Marshall, who acted as his secretary. The two chiefs shook hands, and Lee at once began a conversation, for he appeared more unembarrassed than his victor. He, as well as his aide-de-camp, was elaborately dressed. Lee wore embroidered gauntlets and a burnished sword, the gift, it is said, of the State of Virginia, while the uniforms of Grant and those who accompanied him were soiled and worn. Some had slept in their boots for days, and Grant, when he started for Farmville, two days before, had been riding around in camp without a sword. He had not visited his own headquarters, and was therefore at this moment without side-arms. The contrast was singular, and Col. Marshall was asked how it came about that his chief and he were so fine, while the national officers had been unable to keep themselves free from the stains of battle and the road. He replied that Sheridan had come upon them suddenly a day or two before, and they were obliged to sacrifice their headquarter train; and, as they could save but one suit of clothes, each hurriedly selected the best that he had, and so it was that at this juncture Lee and his aide-de-camp were better dressed than the men that had pursued them. Lee was tall, fine in person, handsome in features, grave and dignified in bearing—if anything, a little too formal. There was a suggestion of effort in his deportment; something that showed he was determined to die gracefully, a hint of Caesar musing himself in his mantle. But apart from this there was nothing to criticize.

GRANT'S TERMS.

Grant, as usual, was simple and composed, but with none of the grand air about him. No station was visible in his manner or appearance. His voice was as calm as ever, and his eye betrayed no emotion. He spoke and acted as plainly as if he were transacting an ordinary matter of business. No one would have suspected that he was about to receive the surrender of an army, or that one of the most terrible wars of modern times had been brought to a triumphant close by the quiet man without a sword who was conversing calmly but rather grimly with the elaborate gentleman in gray and gold.

The conversation at first related to the meeting of the two soldiers in earlier years in Mexico, when Grant had been a subaltern and Lee a staff officer of Scott. The rebel General, however, soon adverted to the object of the interview. "I asked to see you, Gen. Grant," he said, "to ascertain upon what terms you would receive the surrender of my army." Grant replied that the officers and men must become prisoners of war, giving up of course all ammunition, weapons, and supplies, but that a parole would be accepted binding them to go to their homes and remain there until exchanged or relieved by proper authority.

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He then wrote out his letter in these words:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA, April 9, 1865.

Lieut. Gen. U. S. Grant, Commanding United States Army:

GENERAL—I have received your letter of this date containing the terms of surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, as proposed by you; as they are substantially the same as those expressed in your letter of the 8th inst., they are accepted. I will proceed to designate the proper officers to carry the stipulations into effect. Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. E. LEE General.

While the conditions were being copied the various Union officers were presented to Lee. He was collected and courteous, bowing to each, but offered none his hand. One, Gen. Seth Williams, who had served closely with him in the old army, attempted to revive old memories, but Lee repelled the advance coldly. He was in no mood to remember ancient friendships, or to recall pleasantly his service in the army, of which he was now a prisoner or under that flag which he had betrayed. He had, however, another request to make. His men were starving; they had lived, he said, on two ears of corn a day for several days. Would Grant supply them with food? There was a train of cars at Lynchburg loaded with rations which had come from Danville for his army. Would Grant allow them to be distributed among the prisoners? Grant, however, told him that this train had been captured the day before by Sheridan. Thus, at the moment of his surrender Lee was absolutely dependent for supplies upon his conqueror. Grant, of course, acquiesced in the request and asked how many rations Lee required. But the rebel General declared that he could not answer the question. He had no idea of his own strength. No return of the brigades had been made for several days. Besides those lost in the battle—killed, captured, and wounded or left on the roadside—the men had been deserting and straggling by thousands. He could not tell what number he had left. All his public and private papers had been destroyed to prevent their falling into the Federal hands. Grant finally inquired if 25,000 rations would suffice, and Lee replied that he knew personally. Longstreet had been at his wedding; Custer was his groomsmen; Heth was a subaltern with him in the Mexican war; others had served with him in garrison or on the Pacific coast. They all expressed their appreciation of his magnanimity. One said to him: "General, we have come to congratulate you upon having won us up." "I hope," replied Grant, "it will be for the good of us all."

Then the other Union officers took their turns, shaking hands cordially with the men whom they had met in many a battle, or with whom they had earlier shared tent or blanket on the Indian trail or on the Mexican frontier, with classmates of West Point and schoolmates of the South. They all expressed their admiration of his magnanimity. One said to him: "General, we have come to congratulate you upon having won us up."

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