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*of Lew Wallace. An
Autobiography. N.Y.
Harper & Brothers*

Lew Wallace: An Autobiography

A REVIEW OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

of

~~GENERAL LEW WALLACE~~

by

~~Major-General Oliver Otis Howard,~~

have

Nothing I ~~ever~~ read, except perhaps Ben-Hur, has so filled my heart and mind and thrilled me as this autobiography of General Lew Wallace. He thus begins his last review:- "Before distractions overtake me, I wish to say that I believe absolutely in the Christian conception of God. X X X The Jesus Christ in whom I believe was, in all stages of his life a human being. His Divinity was the Spirit, and the Spirit was God."

That was characteristic of the man as soldier, diplomat and in all relations of life.

Wallace was very young when his mother died, herself but twenty-seven. As he describes her, she had a large, loving Christian heart. She was greatly puzzled by the restless, wayward boy, - ~~could govern him best by a boy's book full of action,~~ though ~~she~~ ^{and} repressed his truancy by ~~many~~ ^{rigorous} other expedients, such as tying him to a bed-post, dressing him in girl's clothing and the like. His devotion to the ferryman, whose aid he became in crossing and recrossing the Wabash at last began to relieve her intense anxiety about him. His strong, military father, a graduate of West Point, used the ~~rod~~ ^{rod} to obtain obedience; so did most of his teachers. After speaking most tenderly of his mother, respectfully of his father and doubtfully of his early teachers, Wallace writes with feeling:

"I Simply plead for discrimination, for forbearance, for teaching, for sympathy. Whoso lays his hand heavily on a boy of spirit X X X is himself an offender in far greater degree than his victim. The schoolmaster who cannot discriminate between pupils lacks the first essential to perfection in an honorable calling."

Again and again his heart cried out, "Mother, mother!" as it did when "the alabaster tinge was on her face" and she never again could respond to his call. I cannot help feeling that had she lived, the Christian fel-

Woman

in his early days,

lowship which she so much enjoyed would have been his ⁱⁿ with its gentle discipline and moulding power, and given him in his youth a happier life.

His reference to that strong and abiding love which knitted him and his life-companion together is wonderful. Who could express it like Lew Wallace?

"The promises were in her face when next I saw her in plain daylight; and after all the trials of years, come and gone—~~now~~—the same promises are as bank notes redeemed, and there is no need of them more."

X X X .

"My temper has never been so hot she could not lay it. She has decided me in doubt, defended me against interruptions, saved me my time by the sacrifice of her own, cheered me when down at heart, lured me back to my tasks when the temper would have whisked me away, held my hand in defeat and rejoiced with me in my triumphs. X X X Hers is a high nature, a composite of genius, commonsense and all best womanly qualities." *Read the book to complete the story of a great earthly love which merges into the heavenly. The steady developement of a great manly, though wayward, soul needed just this sunshine of a true and steady, perennial loving-kindness.*

Wallace never loses his sense of humor. It will crop out in his dealings with the most serious subjects and often in his official reports; for example, when drilling his regiment at Evansville, "The grumbling was loud, sometimes angry; but it was met with a spell of stone-deafness."

His story of his
Wallace's career as a young Lieutenant of 19 years ~~told in his book~~ in the Mexican Campaign of 1847 is a gem by itself. His conclusions regarding General Taylor differ from mine. I think he would have modified them had he seen more of the man, ~~but~~ perhaps not. From Wallace's standpoint, Gen. ^{oral} Taylor was unnecessarily severe with the 1st Indiana, Wallace's Regiment. Wallace thinks that the intelligent reader of history will

"Dear General Wallace:- I congratulate you upon the gallant conduct of your Regiment. Thank them (your men) and express to the (successful) party how highly I honor their heroic courage, etc." Schuyler Colfax added his mite: "The President (Lincoln) told me day before yesterday that Indiana had won nearly all the glory so far....." ⁴ "The President alluded especially to your splendid dash on Romney." ^{after} But our failure at Bull Run, ^{on} the Indiana men, being but three months' enlistments, returned home and were mustered out.

Wallace's favorite, the 11th Indiana, re-enlisted and was taken by ^{him} Wallace, its Colonel, to St. Louis. Here he found Gen. ^{Freemont} Freemont in command. At Freemont's headquarters he was received in such a humiliating style that he said to himself: "Well, Ben. McCulloch with his red men and white savages can't be coming here. This is a headquarters for politicians, not soldiers." So, using the telegraph, he sought and obtained an order to proceed to Paducah, Kentucky, and so he came under the immediate command of General Chas. F. Smith. Wallace's sketch of ^{Smith} ~~him~~ is fine: "Tall, erect, broad-shouldered, a symmetrical figure in a well fitting uniform. He held his head high; long white mustaches trailed below his chin shading his lower face; perfect health left its morning colors on his cheeks, and his blue eyes, bright with invitation, negatived the reputation he bore for sternness." Albert Sidney Johnston was regarded as the ablest Confederate Commander in the West; Gen. Chas. F. Smith, on the Union side at the time Wallace met him, was believed by the Army to be more than Albert Sidney's match. The lessons General Smith gave Colonel Wallace during his sojourn at Paducah he never forgot. His hearty conformity to them brought him promotion ^{on} September 3rd, 1861. It was then that General Wallace entertained General Grant and part of his staff. Grant then "had not even fought the battle of Belmont. X.X X Grant drew his chair toward

the grate and said, spreading his hands before the blaze and looking around: "Well, this is cheerful!" One of the many charges of too much hilarity grew out of Wallace's entertainment. Articles very dreadful against Grant and Smith were published broadcast.

~~Wallace~~^{He} says: "In self defence I finally traced the offensive articles to a regimental chaplain, and induced him to resign. The General himself, I think, acquitted me of blame, but certain members of his staff were not so generous."

It is not very long now before we find Wallace in active work, first, with a brigade co-operating with the "Belmont affair" successfully; then on and on up the Cumberland to Forts Heiman and Henry (February, 1862) in conjunction with the good Admiral Foote and his ^{Naval} ~~Naval~~ Brigade. When Grant moves over to the Tennessee to attack Fort Donelson, Wallace, soon to command a division, is left behind at Fort Heiman; but sudden need brings him forward, and with a good Division, he does his best military work. His account of ~~that, that is,~~ the part his brigades played in the last attack upon the Confederates under General Buckner, is clear and graphic.

In the order of time, we come to the great battle of Pittsburg Landing. I will not even attempt to summarize General Wallace's completed story of the operations of Halleck, Grant and Buel at this engagement of two days, usually called the Battle of Shiloh (April 6th and 7th, 1862). He is as careful and minute, often as dramatic, as Lord Roberts was in his descriptions of the Seige of Delhi. And, surely, it would be wrong to attach any blame to Wallace himself for not getting upon the bloody field the first day; it is pretty clear that he and his splendid Division led in the hard fought and successful struggle of the second day. Halleck's later course toward Wallace is like the persecution that General Stone received after Ball's Bluff. He relieved him from his Division and con-

wonder greatly at the injustice done to the 2nd Indiana, "but at nothing so much as at the General commanding (General Zachary Taylor). There may even come to him [the reader] a realization of the lamentable fact that a man may have been a successful General and popular President of the United States, yet lack the elements without which no man can be truly great - justice and truth."

Wallace calls me to account (in my Biography of Taylor) for not going behind General Taylor's report of the Battle of Buena Vista. And now after new evidence has come to me I am glad enough to modify my original statements. Surely the 2nd Indiana Regiment, though it broke to the rear, was not to be blamed for obeying the order of its Colonel (Bowles) so clearly and distinctly given, ^{namely} viz: "Cease firing and retreat". General Wallace's defense of the regiment is perfect. The regiment itself, by its losses and subsequent gallantry on the field of Buena Vista, deserves unqualified praise.

Having been a Democrat, "one of the straitest of the sect", his sudden and strong conviction of duty to the Old Flag after the firing upon it at Fort Sumter, is characteristic of the manly man. He thought carefully and systematically; he kept analyzing like a clear-sighted judge; he reached definite conclusions and then put them into immediate action. It is delightful to follow him, ^{first} ~~1st~~, to the Adjutant-Generalship of Indiana, thence to a regiment; then comes a brigade under General Paterson on the border of Maryland and West Virginia. Here Wallace had the first mead of praise, a recognition which gave him the joy which he then coveted: "The Commanding General has the satisfaction to announce to the troops a second victory over the insurgents by a small party of Indiana volunteers under Colonel Wallace, the 20th inst. (June, 1861)" Not only Paterson but McClellan recognized him:

stantly prevented him from getting a proper command; yet when a defender of the Ohio border was demanded Governor Morton used his services, with a single regiment or brigade. When Cincinnati was threatened by Kirby Smith (Heth's Corps) in 1863, Wallace was put in charge of the great city, and promptly organized an army of successful defense. When Confederate Morgan and his troops raided Indiana, Wallace backed up every ^{Union} detachment and with Governor Morton's help saved Indianapolis and the Confederate prisoners of war from capture. At last Mr. Lincoln, against Gen. ^{and} Halleck's protest, gave General Wallace the Middle Department with his headquarters at Baltimore.

If one wants to study the work of a diplomatist, ^{man who was a} General of resources, and ^a statesman, let him read carefully General Wallace's sketch of the Maryland plan and ^{the} battle of the Monocacy. It was a side thrust to prevent General Early, with substantially two Army Corps, from marching into Washington (July, 1864). With an incredibly small force he met Early, and fought him so hard as to delay him at least twenty-four hours. This enabled Grant to get the 6th and 19th Corps within the defences of the Capital. Then, of course, Washington with its inhabitants and archives was safe. Wallace had the credit from the President and Generals for this prompt and effective work.

To follow his diplomacy, that helped so largely to unite us ^{in friendship} with the Republic of Mexico, -requiring perilous journeys to Texas and along its borders; to go with him as Governor of New Mexico, ^{which he ~~sent~~ ed} that lifted that ~~territory~~ ^{to} so largely in proper civilization; to step with him over to Turkey, and see how by his large heartedness he obtained the best things for us from the Sultan; ^{will enable us to comprehend only a} ~~all this public service only gives a modicum of what~~ ^{the public service} he ^{rendered to} ~~really did for~~ his country, to whose interests he was ever most devoted and loyal.

And, after all has been said, ^{does not} his permanent and unusual fame rest ^{by} upon his literary works? He was a good and successful lawyer, but he did the law work he says as a bread-earner. He was a good public speaker, presenting his thoughts with clearness and beauty, but ^{his heart was in} ~~nothing compares~~ ~~with his books.~~

"The Fair God" caused me to review with care Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico." "The Prince of India" startles me as a work of the imagination; but "Ben-Hur" is ^{Paramount:} ~~everything;~~ it is poetry, history, drama and devotion. It adds so much freshness to all things ^{it touches} that it makes them new. It not only ^{realizes} ~~shows~~ the ^{divine offices} possibility of the prophet, priest and king, but it ^{vivifies the} ~~takes you~~ ~~story of the Christ as nothing else has done outside of the simple~~ ~~to live with him as nothing except the Divine Word itself can do.~~ ~~annals of the Gospels.~~

He told me on the Bosphorus the story of how he came to undertake "Ben-Hur," substantially the same account as in this "Autobiography." ^{of No} ~~course every library and every book-store in our land and other lands can~~ ~~afford to be without~~ ~~will soon contain this book of books~~ ^{or home} ^{or any} ~~of extraordinary interest.~~ ~~human interest and remarkable achievement.~~

Oliuer Otis Howard
Major-General &c
(Retired)