



A. Lincoln.

LINCOLN
AS THE SOUTH
SHOULD KNOW HIM

by
Oscar William Blacknall

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In a blaze of burning roof-trees,
 under clouds of smoke and flame,
Sprang a new word into being,
 from a stern and dreaded name;
Gaunt and grim and like a specter
 rose that word before the world,
From a land of bloom and beauty
 into ruin rudely hurled.
From a people scourged by exile,
 from a city ostracized,
Pallas-like it sprang to being –
 and that word is “Shermanized.”

L. Virginia French.

CHAPTER ONE



What thick hides and short memories we Southern folk have, and how inconsistent we are! We call down anathema on the Kaiser's head for the devastation of Belgium; in almost the same breath we raise pæans to Lincoln, who was responsible for the far more causeless and ruthless devastation of the South by Sherman – Sherman, who waged war so atrocious that its very author could find no name on earth to match, but had to go down below to get it. Well might he, with Milton's Satan, say

“Where I am is hell.”

Satan lit its fires in his own breast; Sherman, in the desolated homes of war, made widows and orphans.

If Belgium had its Louvain and Antwerp, so also had the South its Columbia, its Atlanta,

its Savannah, its Charleston.

Countless Belgium homes have been burned. But there has been nothing like systematic, utter destruction. The Kaiser, outnumbered, hard beset, the very existence of his country in imminent peril has increased his slender stoic of food by robbing Belgium, electing to starve foe rather than friend. (This was written in January, 1915.) That vengeance, not necessity, prompted the black path that Sherman cut through the South, the evidence is full and damning. On December 18, 1864, General Halleck, Chief of Staff to President Lincoln, and necessarily in close touch with him, writes to Sherman as follows: "Should you capture Charleston, I hope by some accident the place will be destroyed. And if a little salt can be sown on its site, it may prevent the future growth of nullification and secession."

Sherman, on the 24th, answers as follows: "I will bear in mind your hint as to Charleston, and do not think that 'salt' will be necessary. When I move, the Fifteenth Corps will be on the right of the right wing, and their position will naturally bring them into Charleston first; and if you have watched the history of that corps you will have remarked that they do their work pretty well. The truth is, the whole army is burning with

an insatiable desire to wreak vengeance on South Carolina.”

One of Wheeler’s scouts, observing Sherman’s advance, reported that during one night, and from one point, he counted over one hundred burning homes. And as to the looting, a letter written by a Federal officer, and found at Camden, S.C., after the army passed, and given in the *Southern Woman’s Magazine*, runs as follows: “We have had a glorious time in this State. The chivalry have been stripped of most of their valuables. Gold watches, silver pitchers, cups, spoons, forks, etc., are as common in camp as blackberries. Of rings, earrings, and breastpins I have a quart. I am not joking – I have at least a quart of jewelry for you and the girls, and some No. 1 diamond pins and rings among them. Don’t show this letter out of the family.”

Sherman long denied burning Columbia, in the most solemn manner calling his God to witness as to his truthfulness. When, after the overwhelming evidence that he did burn it was adduced, he unblushingly admitted the fact, and that he had lied on Wade Hampton with the purpose of rendering him unpopular, and thereby weakening his cause. But a mere lie shines white against the black ground of Sherman’s character.

I could pile up a mountain of facts as damn-

ing as those given. But what boots it to prove again what too long ago has been proven – that not since Attila, “The Scourge of God,” cut his black swath across Europe fifteen hundred years ago has Sherman’s “March to the Sea” had its fellow.

The conversion of the Shenandoah region into a waste so complete that, in Sheridan’s own words, a crow flying over it would have had to carry his rations – a destruction not only of every vestige of food, of all animals and fowls, but also of every implement that could be used to make or prepare more food, every millstone, wagon, plow, rake, and harrow, down to the flower-hoes of the women, may have been a military necessity, for this lovely valley was, in some measure, the granary of Lee’s army.

The necessities of war demanded that Sherman live off the country he traversed. Those elastic necessities may have been stretched to demand that he destroy even the pitiful stint of food that the South had left; that he wrest the last morsel from the mouth of the mother and babe, lest, perchance, some crumb thereof reach and nourish the men at the front. But what necessity of war, except that brand that Sherman fathered and sponsored, demanded that the torch follow the pillager, that every home be burned,

and famishing mother and babe be turned out in midwinter to die of cold and exposure?

“But didn’t ‘Sherman’s March’ shorten the war; didn’t it shake Lee’s lines around Petersburg when his men knew that fire and rapine were in their homes?” is sometimes asked. Doubtless. And it might have shaken them all the more had wives and babes been burnt in these homes rather than left to starve in their ruins. It might have been not only more effective but more merciful. But there are abysmal depths of atrocity from which even the “hired assassin” recoils – that is, unless he belongs to the Attilas, Alvas, and Shermans. There are rules of civilized warfare which the soldier in every extremity must observe or else have heaped upon him the execration of mankind.

The whole world shudders at the robbery and partial ruin of only a part of Belgium. Sherman devastated an area nearly twice as great as the whole of Belgium and devastated it utterly, leaving only blackened chimneys and starving women and children in his wake. That his hell was only some sixty miles wide was owing to no lack of Satanic ferocity on his part. It would have been much wider had not Wheeler, with his handful of horse, hung close to Sherman’s flanks, with a quick halter for every marauder he

caught in the act. Sherman's little finger was heavier than the whole martial first of the Kaiser. Belgium was a battle-ground – the largest and fiercest that even blood-soaked old Mother Earth ever saw. But it took five million men five months to work wreck and ruin; Sherman did it overnight night with sixty thousand. The Kaiser found at least a potential sniper in every window; his every step was a battle. Sherman had only a light screen of cavalry to brush aside, and not always even that.

That there was less starvation in Sherman's path than the Kaiser's – though many a high-born Southern lady kept life in her children for the time with the waste corn slobbered from the mouths of the Federal cavalry and artillery horses – was because the South was large and far less densely populated than Belgium, and that the victims sought shelter in the unravaged regions which Wheeler had saved.

Then there is a hideous chapter in this black book that never has and never will be written – so hideous that even the South has been fain to draw over it the curtain of oblivion. I mean the violence that Southern women suffered at the hands of Sherman's ruffians. It is a well-known fact, and by none better known than by military men themselves, that men herded in camps, re-

moved from the restraints of home, rapidly tend to relapse towards barbarism, and that only the iron hand of discipline can hold them in check. Relax that discipline in one respect, sanction the perpetration of one crime, and all crimes, especially the crime against woman, follows as a natural sequence.

No one who lived in or near Sherman's path in Georgia, South Carolina, or even in this State, after the war was over and the troops marching for disbandment in Washington, can lack knowledge of cases that came to light, despite every effort of the hapless victims themselves to hide them. To recall only the cases which abide with me most vividly, that came practically under my own observation, or that I had first-hand knowledge of – the beautiful girl to whose rescue came one of Wheeler's troopers, and who, seized and used as a shield by the ruffian who had abused her, in her agony begged the trooper to shoot through her body and kill him; but by a dexterous movement the brute was killed over her shoulder.

The cottage, with its rose-covered porch, in which lived the young widow and her three daughters, all noted for their beauty and refinement, at whose door a hand of Federal troopers drew rein at dusk – the screams and sobs that all

the live-long night the neighbors heard, but dared not stir – the tomblike aspect of the cottage, with no smoke from the chimneys, no sign of life, for days and days afterwards – the deep grave of forgetfulness that the sorrowing neighborhood dug for the whole horrible affair, where it rests this day. The very first offense of a Negro against a white woman that I ever heard of was committed in this neighborhood, in April, 1865, by one who had been under Sherman's tutelage. What, indeed, was the saturnalia of crime against Southern woman for a generation afterwards but the aftermath, the legacy, of that foulest blot on American history – Sherman's vaunted "March to the Sea"?