Unpublished Glimpses of President Lincoln Are Revealed by William H. Tisdale, Who Was Personal Orderly on Special Duty at White House in Washington for More Than Two Years

Thrills and Sorrows Give Picture of Great American —Birthday is Tuesday

BY WILLIAM H. TISDALE

Personal Orderly to President Lincoln, on Special Duty at the White House, September, 1862, to October, 1864.

The first time I came in close personal contact with President Lincoln was in the late summer of 1862. At that time I was in D Troop, Eleventh New York Cavalry, on duty in the city of Washington. Ours was called the Bay Horse Troop. Troop A, known as the Black Horse troop, had been assigned as the president's body-guard, and was quartered in the White House grounds, some little distance to the rear of what then was known as the Executive Mansion.

One warm morning I was sent for by General Halleck's adjutant, Colonel Kelton, with whom I was acquainted. I reported to him at once, saluted, and stood at attention. After a moment's silence, Col. Kelton said:

"Tisdale, you probably have heard that some important dispatches sent from the White House on several recent occasions have fallen into the hands of confederate spies. It is important for the president to have at hand a personal orderly who can be trusted."

For the second time Col. Kelton paused, fixing me with a clear, penetrating gaze as if he were following every thought in my mind. Then he added:

"I have recommended you for this responsible duty."

He swung himself into the saddle, I did the same, and we trotted down toward the White House. There we dismounted and I followed him through the corridors and to the president's office. Col. Kelton walked in, while I stood in the doorway. Across the room, seated at his desk, was Abraham Lincoln. A few words of greeting, and then Col. Kelton presented me to the president, who stretched forth his hand without rising from his chair.

Lincoln's Greeting Kindly

Although in the actual presence of my commander-in-chief I felt no embarrassment. There was something kindly and considerate in the way he looked at me as he quietly said:

"You have been recommended to me as my orderly. You seem to be a bright young man. I hope you will fill the bill." After a moment he added, "You can report with Troop A, back of the building, there. You will find a place for your horse and will draw your rations with Troop A."

When I saw that Mr. Lincoln had no more to say, I saluted, left the White House, took my horse and went around to the rear where in the far-reaching grounds were the barracks and stables of A Troop. This was commanded by a Long Island man, Captain Hand, and as a matter of courtesy and common sense I paid my respects to him although he knew that I was not part of his command, but was under the personal orders of the president.

As soon as I had found a place for my mount I went back to the White House and waited for whatever might turn up. It seemed very strange that out of all the hundreds of thousands of men in the Union Army I should have been selected for duty which was filled with grave responsibility. A single blunder in carrying dispatches, the loss of a single one through accident or scheming of the enemy's spies, might bring terrible disaster but the possible danger did not dismay me. I wondered, though, what would be thought of my new job by the old folks who lived around Ausable Forks, New York, in the foothills of the Adirondacks, where I had been born in 1843.

There I lived until ten years old, when we moved to Canton, St. Lawrence County, N. Y. Four years later I quit school, and went to work driving terms, principally, until Summer was fired on. I was seventeen then and immediately listed in Scott's Nine Hundred, as it was called before long we went to Staten Island for organization, and then were sent to Washington, where, as already mentioned, the Black Horse Troop was detailed as Lincoln's bodyguard and the other troops were distributed among various units on duty in and around the city.

Sent to Foreign Legations

There wasn't much opportunity to follow this train of thought, however, for soon I was given a dispatch to carry to the War Department, and shortly after finishing this first errand I was sent off with a number of envelopes addressed to the British minister, the French, German, and other legations, these being invitations to attend a state affair at the White House.

There was not much for me to do in the next few days but time did not hang heavily— of that you may be sure. We were at the height of the Civil war. Armies were desperate struggle for mastery. Everything in the Union cause centered in that building where it was my fortune to be stationed, and the whole overwhelming burden finally rested on that great man whom it was my privilege to see and to serve. Coming in and out of the White House were generals, and senators, naval officers, bankers who were financing the war, business men who were furnishing supplies, and, of course, a constant stream of seekers after office and other favors.

One day I was just leaving the president's office when I saw a woman out in the corridor who was begging the officer on duty to let her see the president.

"Oh, I must see him!" she cried, while tears gushed down her cheeks. "My boy———by boy."

"Yes, I know," said the officer, not enwithout sympathy, "but the president is too busy to see anybody."

At that she swayed and I thought she was going to faint; but she got a grip on herself in a moment. And before that moment had passed I went back to the president and told him that just outside his door was a middle-aged woman, evidently in great trouble, who wanted to see him.

"Let her come in," he said.

Asleep On Picket Duty

Her son was in an infantry regiment. He had been caught asleep at night while on picket duty. For this he had been court martialed, found guilty, and sentenced to be shot.

"My boy has always been a good boy, Mr. President," the woman managed to say in her sobbing voice. "He has always done his duty, but that time his regiment was short, very short, owing to sickness, and my boy had been on duty for three days and nights in succession. He was utterly exhausted———so exhausted he simply could not keep awake."

"Thank you for coming here to tell me," was Mr. Lincoln's quiet rejoinder. "I will look into this."

Immediately he took up his pen, wrote a brief note, handed it to me and told me to take it at once across the chain bridge to the fort where the lad was incarcerated and waiting to be shot the next day. I delivered the note to the commandant of the fort who read the message, sprang on his horse, and started for the White House, while I followed a few yards in the rear.

Instead of being shot to death the unfortunate young soldier was taken, the next day, to see the president He told exactly the same story his mother had told. She was there in the White House at this time, also——a woman of forty-five to fifty, well dressed, and apparently intelligent; of good, American stock, I thought.

While her boy was telling his story, the president listened attentively Then he wrote another note to the commandant of the fort, saying the accused soldier was to be ordered back on active duty.

When the mother heard this she was nearly wild with joy; it was almost heart-rending to see her so suddenly lifted from despair to exaltation.

Her son was a bright young man. There is not the slightest doubt that he told the exact truth. Later he made a first class soldier.

Friend of Lincoln Children

During those first few days as the president's personal orderly there seemed to be little to do. Now and then a dispatch was given me to take across the way to the War Department but a good deal of the time was spent in the White House grounds, simply waiting to be called. It was at this time that I became acquainted with Tad Lincoln and the other children, and with the little son of General Halleck, who would come over from his father's residence in Georgetown to play. Mrs. Halleck sometimes came with him, she and Mrs. Lincoln appearing to be good friends.

At the end of about a week I was given three dispatches. One was to be delivered at the War Department, the second to the Navy Department, and the third to the commandant of the Washington Navy Yard. In some way I received the impression that these dispatches were of special importance, especially the third one. Of course any message from the president was of great importance, and must be delivered at no matter what risk or danger. This was thoroughly understood. Nevertheless those on duty at the White House, among them myself, had gained the impression that preparations were being made for a very important naval movement off Roanoke, and when handed the three dispatches mentioned, I felt sure they had to do with this forthcoming attack by sea. Also I knew that its success depended upon the element of surprise. If any inkling of it got out in advance, the whole thing might be a failure.

I carried two of the dispatches to the War Department and the Navy Department, delivering them as directed; then mounted my horse and started down Pennsylvania avenue, covering one long square after another until I turned off toward the Navy Yard. The better part of the city soon was left behind, and I was riding through an area occupied for the most part by saloons and rickety buildings, with side streets in which were worse places.

Halted by Spy's Offer

As I passed one of these side streets I saw in it a number of men from my own company, the Bay Horse Troop, going into and around the houses. They happened to be doing provost guard that day, and were searching for soldiers who were deserters or who were absent without leave. It wasn't particularly attractive work and I congratulated myself on the new job as personal orderly to the president as I trotted along.

A few minutes later my attention was attracted by a young man standing on the sidewalk who watched me as I came toward him. He was good looking, well set-up, well dressed. When I was nearly abreast of him he beckoned to me.

Swerving my horse over toward the corner where he stood, I reined down to a walk, and heard him say in guarded tones:

"Do you want to make some money?"

"Certainly, I always want money."

"Well," the stranger went on speaking more rapidly

"I happen to know you are carrying dispatches to the Navy Yard." "At this my heart gave a little jump). "I am interested in them," he continued. "If you will come into the back room of this saloon, and let me steam open the envelope and read the dispatches I'll give you a hundred dollars. There won't be the slightest danger, for I can seal up the envelope again so nobody can tell it was ever opened. What do you say?"

The thing I had been warned about had happened and within little more than a week after President Lincoln had taken me by the hand, saying, with his grave smile, that he thought I could be trusted. For a few seconds I didn't know what to do. Remember that I then was barely nineteen; scarcely more than a boy, who had lived his few years in a tiny community under shadow of the Adirondacks and knew nothing whatever of the world. Plan after plan rushed through my mind. But of one thing I was sure from the instant this stranger commenced speaking. He must not get within reach of those dispatches, and somehow I must get the drop on him and take him prisoner. So while sparring for time I said:

He Reaches For The Dispatches

"One hundred dollars isn't enough. It's worth two hundred."

"All right," he answered promptly, pulling out a wallet and taking out four fifty-dollar bills.

"Give me the money first," I said, and he did so. I put it away in a pocket, and then made believe to reach for the dispatches which were tightly fixed in my belt. But instead of drawing them out I whipped out my pistol, aimed it at his head, and said:

"Hands up!"

And up they went, for I meant business, and he knew I meant it.

"About face!" I commanded. Then, keeping him covered, I marched him back toward the side street where I had seen the men of the Bay Horse troop. They were just coming out of it as we arrived there, in charge of Captain Gilbert A. Nicholette, who was in command of the provost guard that day.

I turned my prisoner over to him, stating that he was a spy, and Captain Nicholette——— an Englishman, by the way——— ordered him locked up in the central guard house.

Then I wheeled my horse, and kept on to the Navy Yard, where the dispatches were safely delivered.

After doing so I rode to the central guard house, where I told the commanding officer what had happened, and gave him the two hundred dollars. He carefully noted down the circumstances, whereupon I saluted, and rode back to the White House.

I never mentioned the adventure to Mr. Lincoln, inasmuch as it had terminated satisfactorily, and I took it as one of the things which were likely to happen now and then. In fact, it quickly passed out of my mind, for almost immediately a great deal of work was given me, and then a few days later the president issued an order that I should have free access to him in his private office whenever I thought this necessary.

Before leaving this incident it should be said that nearly two years afterward I was riding out of the White House grounds when I saw standing by the gates a man who seemed familiar. As I drew nearer I recongnized him, not as a ghost, but as the well-dressed fellow who had tried to bribe me when on my way to the Navy yard with dispatches.

A Sequel After Two Years

"Hullo!" he said evidently enjoying my astonishment. "Didn't expect to see me again, did you?"

"Not alive," I rejoined. "I supposed that you had been shot, or hanged, long ago."

"Well," he said with a laugh, "If you're interested, I'll tell you why I wasn't executed as a spy. My name is Baker. I'm a son of Colonel Baker, of the Secret Service. I was sent out that morning a couple of years ago to track the president's new orderly and see whether he could be trusted, or whether he was dishonest enough to accept a bribe and let me open the dispatches."

Then, of course, I saw the whole thing in a flash and remembered that shortly afterward the president began to trust me with matters outside the regular duty of dispatch bearer. For xample ,almost every week, in good weather, I was directed to accompany Mrs. Lincoln and some of the hildren when they went to ride in the saddle. Frequently Mrs. Halleck went along, and her boy Harry. Mrs. Lincoln rode well and Mrs. Halleck was a supberb horsewoman. We could go up around Rock Creek or down by he Navy Yard, over to Alexandria or in some other direction. One day General Halleck told the president that Mosboy's men had made several aids and had captured several officers of the Union army in a part of the country where Mrs. Lincoln liked to ride, and that it was not safe for her or Mrs. Halleck or their children to go there. So after that re rode n defferent areas.

Not very long after I had taken up the special duty at the White House a great engagement occurred—the battle of Antietam. The national army had been consolidated at Washington with Pope's command, and the whole, under McClellan, moved out to meet and grapple with Lee and his confederate hosts, numbering 65,000.

For a day or two little was heard of any fighting but late in the afternoon of September 16 McClellan threw forward Hooker's corps and the battle was on. The army of the Potomac had been defeated in seven days of fighting on the line of the Chickahominy, the confederates had prepared for an invasion of Maryland, worsted Pope's army at Cedar Mountain, in the second battle of Bull Run, and at Chantilly, crossed the Potomac near Leesburg, and concentrated their forces at Frederick. It was a most anxious time. Upon the new battle, just beginning at Antietam, might depend the future of the nation—possibly the future of two. North and South.

Throughout the late afternoon and early night dispatches had been pouring into the War department, whence they were instantly taken to the president where he sat at his desk, fully aware of the extreme gravity of the situation, yet calm unhurried, painstaking in his examination of one after another as they were brought in.

It was a busy evening for all of us stationed at the White House, and I was not sorry when I was dismissed with instructions to get some rest as soon as possible, because I might be needed later on. This order, like all others, was instantly obeyed. I went out to the barracks of the Black Horse Troop, dropped into my bed, and immediately fell sound asleep.

The next thing I knew was being awakened by a colored messenger from the White House, who shook me by the shoulder, saying respectfully:

"Please open yuh eyes, suh! Please wake up! The president says foh yuh to saddle his hawse and youah own, and repoht at once by the big front dooh."

Before the darkey ceased speaking I sprang out of bed, clapped on my cap and was on the way to the stables. At the main entrance of the White House I saw Mr. Lincoln come down the broad steps.

Lincoln Wore Slouch Hat

It was a warm September night and he had on the army slouch hat he often wore, although he has so frequently been pictured in a tall hat of the old-fashioned stove pipe kind that nowadays a good many people think he invariably wore such headgear. Strangely enough, also, people seem to think he was awkward, ungainly, even clumsy. But he was not. And tonight he swung up into the saddle with the ease and unconscious grace of a cavalryman. The moment he was seated I sprang upon my own mount and followed him down the curving driveway out of the White House grounds and then to the left in Pennsylvania avenue.

It was in mid-September, very warm weather and shortly before midnight. The streets were poorly lighted; only an occasional passer-by could be seen. Excepting for the clash of steel-shod hoofs on the cobblestones not a sound could be heard.

For a few moments I rode on behind Mr. Lincoln, as was proper; gazing at his tall form sitting so easily, so erect, and wondering whether any human being—even such a marvel of strenth as he—could continue indefinitely to carry the terrible weight that was laid upon his shoulders. Here he was perfectly calm after spending hours studying that stream of dispatches telling of the Battle of Antietam. Yet so critical was the situation that he felt it necessary, late as it was, to hasten for consultation with Halleck, general in command of all the armies of the United States.

Halleck was living in High Street, Georgetown, and used his residence as military headquarters. Ordinarily the president would have sent for him to come to the White House; but this would have meant dispatching a summons by messenger and time would be lost. It was quicker to mount a horse and ride direct to Halleck. The emergency must be very grave indeed, I thought, to cause this unusual procedure; and I was wondering what it really meant for the country when Mr. Lincoln partly turned in his saddle and told me to come up and ride beside him.

We rode on in the soft night air, past darkened houses, past occasional street lights burning feebly, with the stars far, far overhead.

To my surprise President Lincoln commenced to talk soon after I had come abreast of him.

"How old are you?" he inquired.

"Nineteen last March, sir."

"Is your mother living?" he continued.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you send money to her regularly?"

"Yes, sir."

He went on in this strain for several minutes, telling me what it means for a mother to have a good son, and the tragedy a mother lives who has a son that is not trustworthy and loving. Sixty years and more have passed since that midnight ride with President Lincoln. Yet when I recall it today I am astonished as I was then to find that this great man, even under all his strain and anxiety, could turn his thoughts to a nineteen-year-old cavalryman and talk to the lad like a kind, wise father. His words really were few, but the thought back of them, the spirit underlying them, made an impression that time has not dimmed.

When he had finished his kindly inquiries and comment Br. Lincoln again lapsed into silence, and so we rode on, striking into High Street to Halleck's house. I dismounted and held the president's horse, but a moment later one of Halleck's body guards called an orderly to hold both the horses and invited me into the front hall of the house, where I remained while Mr. Lincoln and Halleck were shut up together in the parlor close by.

It was nearly an hour later when the President came out and walked out of the house, mounted his horse, and rode back to the Executive Mansion while I followed, alert and attentive.

This experience was repeated a good deal later when dispatches poured in telling of the Battle of the Wilderness; then again I rode with the president late at night to Halleck's headquarters.

Eevery morning I went on duty at the White House, arriving outside the president's office at about eight o'clock, and never missed seeing him a single day while serving as his orderly, from September, 1862, until October, 1864, when my regiment was ordered out of the department.

TISDALE, VETERAN OF MANY CAMPAIGNS, SPENT TWO YEARS AT SIDE OF LINCOLN

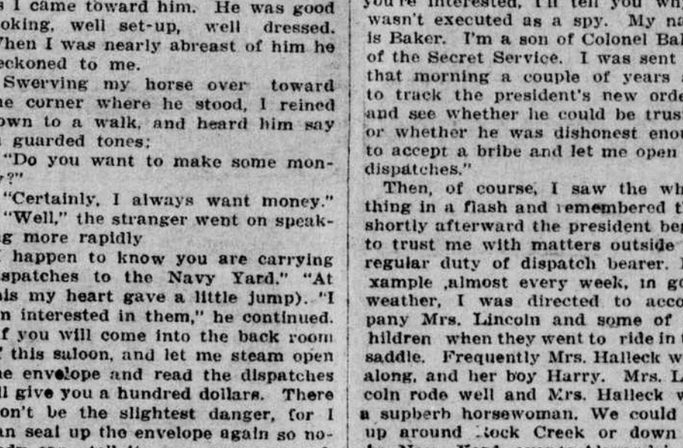
Few now living knew Abraham Lincoln personally; fewer still saw him day and night in the trying years of the Civil war. One of the smaller number is William K. Tisdale, author of the accompanying article, "Lincoln as I Knew Him."

At last Mr. Tisdale—he has the courtesy title of major—has written his recollections of the president, embodying details never before told.

Mr. Tisdale, who is now more than 80 years old, is an attendant of the New York Supreme Court, in which capacity he has served for many years. On his last birthday, May 26, supreme court justices then sitting in New York assembled in their robes of office and with brief addresses and congratulations fittingly celebrated the event.

After serving in the Union army four years and a month, Mr. Tisdale was mustered out on September 30, 1865, and returned to his home, Canton, N. Y. The next year he enlisted in the regular army and during five years of service took part, under General Custer, in twenty one general engagements with Indians and in many minor engagements.

He is proudest, however, of the two years during which he held the full confidence of Lincoln while he served as the president's dispatch bearer.



A HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED HISTORIC DOCUMENT IN THE HANDWRITING OF LINCOLN.

It is said of the great Protestant Episcopal cathedral, now building in Washington, that it is to be "the Westminster Abbey of the United States." It takes more than a fine building, however, to make a Westminster Abbey. You couldn't create a Mount Vernon by building a nice country house on the edge of a river. You must first have your George Washington.

To create a Westminster Abbey you want a thousand years of history, and a thousand years of great men. It can't be made to order.

STONEWALL JACKSON NEXT FIGURE ON STONE MOUNTAIN

Atlanta—The head of Stonewall Jackson will be the next figure completed in the gigantic panorama of the "Lost Cause" on Stone Mountain here.

Gutzon Borgluum, sculptor, who is directing the carving of the massive memorial in the huge granite rock, has started work on the second figure and hopes to have it completed by early summer.

The Reason

Triplet acrostics. Key, letter sixteen of each line.

He.

I proposed at the place we last met—
She froze my poor heart to the core!
Why now shall she call me sweet pet?—
I proposed at that place we last met;
I can claim she's a jazzy coquet,
And I'm right to be jealous and sore!
I proposed at the last place we met—
Oh, she froze my poor heart to the core!

Narrow Minds.

Nathaniel Hawthorne.

It is difficult for the good Christian to acknowledge the good Pagan; almost impossible for the good orthodox to grasp the hand of the good Unitarian, leaving to their Creator to settle the matters in dispute; and giving their mutual efforts strongly and trustingly to whatever right thing is too evident to be mistaken. Then again, though the heart be large, yet the mind is often of such moderate dimensions as to be exclusively filled up with one idea.

Tells True Story of Pardon Of Sentry Who Fell Asleep at Post

GREAT MEN SHARE FEB. 22

Washington's Birthday Also Anniversary Other Leaders in History Making

New York Sun

Besides being the birthday of George Washington February 22 is also the natal day of several other prominent Americans. Best known among them is James Russell Lowell, poet, critic, professor and diplomat. The fact that Lowell, whose staunch Americanism found expression in "The Biglow Papers" and other writings, was born on the same day as the Father of His Country, has been frequently commented upon. Lowell was born in Cambridge, Mass., in 1819. He died in 1891. Rembrandt Peale, artist, who painted Washington's portrait, was born February 22, 1778.

Washington's birthday anniversary in 1838 was the birthday of two American women who achieved fame as writers. One of them was Margaret E. Sangster and the other was Rebecca S. Clarke, who used the pen name "Sophie May." Nathaniel L. Shaler, the noted geologist and paleontologist, was born on Washington's Birthday in 1841. Frank L. Stanton of Atlanta, poet, was born February 22, 1857.

A memorable Washington's Birthday was that of 1847, the first day of the battle of Buena Vista, in the war with Mexico. Gen. Zachary Taylor commanded the American troops. At one time, when the Mexican fire was especially heavy, a Mexican officer entered the American lines with a message from Gen. Santa Ana. He found Taylor sitting on his famous horse Whitey and having one leg over the pommel of his saddle. When the Mexican asked the American General what he was waiting for, "Old Rough and Ready" replied: "For Santa Ana to surrender."

The Mexican returned to his own army and soon after a battery commenced firing upon Taylor's position. The General remained, looking at the battlefield through his spyglass. When one of his men suggested that his white horse made too conspicuous a mark for the Mexican's fire, Taylor replied that "the old fellow had missed the fun at Monterey and he should have his share this time."

One of Taylor's aids, a Mr. Crittenden, sent to Santa Ana's headquarters with a message, was told that if Taylor would surrender he would be protected. (The Mexican army outnumbered Taylor's twenty thousand to six thousand.) Crittenden replied: "Gen. Taylor never surrenders!" During the Presidential campaign of 1848, when Taylor ran successfully against Cass and Van Buren, this became a favorite battle cry of the Whigs.

It was in the battle of Buena Vista, according to history or tradition, that the famous saying, "A little more grape, Capt. Bragg!" had its origin. The story runs that Taylor shouted the order to Capt. Bragg when the Mexicans attacked the American line and the American artillery, commanded by Bragg (afterward a famous General of the Confederacy), repulsed them.

At a Washington's Birthday Party

Velvet coats they wore, and satin,
Powdered hair and epaulette,
Silver buckles, lace und ruffles,
When they danced the minuet.
Keeping time to stately measure,
Pausing as the partners met,
Gallant bow and graceful courtesy,
Thus they danced the minuet.
Gone is all this stately dancing,
Out of fashion, I regret;
Only at a dress-up party
Do we dance the minuet.

Helen Hoopes, in Kansas City Star.

The first paper mill in America was opened near Philadelphia in 1690. The paper-making was done by hand, and until 1756, when the pulp engine was introduced into America from Holland, the rags continued to be beaten into pulp by hand.

Something Like That.

From Answers, London.

Father sat by the fire reading a newspaper. By his side sat his small son, reading, too. Presently the lad looked up.

"Father," he said.

"Well, what is it, my boy?"

"What does 'apprenticing mean?"

"It means the binding of one person to another by agreement, and that the person so bound has to teach the other all he can of his trade or profession, while the other has to watch and learn how things are done and to make himself useful in any way that he can."

"Then," said Johnny wisely, "I suppose you're apprenticed to mother, aren't you, father?"

DAILY TREASURY.

Strange, how yesterday grows dear
And hallowed with its simple round,
How mem'ry finds as sweet as song
The echo of its homely sound.

Strange, that phrases spoken then
That found no answer in the heart,
Awake in yearning retrospect
To play a tender, cherished part.

Hollyhocks against the wall,
With fluted flounces little prized,
Spring up in recollection's hour
With beauty once unrealized.