

Sir Henry M. Stanley---Journalist and Explorer

Personal Recollections of the Great Traveler by Edward Rosewater

THE recent death of Sir Henry M. Stanley vividly recalls to my memory my first meeting with the intrepid African explorer and subsequent incidents that brought us together after his return to America. In the fall of 1896 a robust young man of 25 or 26, rather short of stature, but heavy set and muscular, with a full head of black hair, black mustache, bluish gray eyes and the bronzed face of a war veteran, presented himself to me with credentials as correspondent of the New York Herald and the St. Louis Democrat, now Globe-Democrat, and bespeaking for him the usual courtesies extended to representatives of the press.

I was then manager of the Pacific telegraph lines and agent of the Associated Press, and very naturally we were brought together quite frequently by reason of our mutual relations as news gatherers. When I first became acquainted with Stanley he appeared to be rather taciturn, morose and uncompanionable. But he gradually thawed out and made himself more sociable. During his stay in Omaha he had a desk in the editorial rooms of the Omaha Republican, where he prepared the manuscript for his letters and penned his special dispatches. The desk, rescued from the salvage of the consolidated Tribune and Republican, is still preserved as a souvenir in the Bee building. Stanley was an occasional contributor to the local columns of the Republican in exchange for news, but was never employed on its editorial staff.

In September, 1867, Stanley accompanied the military expedition to Fort Laramie, headed by General W. T. Sherman, with whom were also Generals Harney and Sanborn, empowered by President Andrew Johnson to negotiate a treaty of peace with the Sioux Indians, who had been on the war path and massacred Colonel Fetterman and a whole company of mounted regulars during the preceding spring. Stanley managed to make himself so unpopular with General Sherman's staff that he was politely invited to retire to the rear, and returned to Omaha before the expedition had concluded its mission.

A few weeks after his return Stanley informed me that he had been commissioned by James Gordon Bennett to proceed to Abyssinia to accompany the British army commanded by General Napier as war correspondent for the New York Herald. The announcement seemed to me decidedly incredible. Why should James Gordon Bennett send to Omaha when there were scores of expert war correspondents in New York and London, and why of all men should he select Stanley, who had impressed me as a man of only moderate ability? But it did not take very long for me to become convinced that Bennett's estimate of Stanley's capacity and mettle had not been over-rated.

Before leaving Omaha Stanley delivered a lecture on his adventures in Turkey, a country he had toured and written up for the New York Herald just after the close of our civil war, but few people in Omaha seemed interested in Stanley and he drew a very slim audience. At its conclusion Stanley asked me to wire the substance to the Associated Press, a request declined politely by me, because the lecture was very dull and the lecturer was comparatively unknown.

A few months later the battle of Magdella was fought and the first news of the victory of the British army and the death of King Theodoros on the battlefield reached London by way of New York through a dispatch wired by Henry M. Stanley to the New York Herald. This was the opening chapter of Stanley's marvelous career in the exploration of the dark continent beginning with the search for David Livingstone and ending with the establishment of the Congo Free State and the rescue of Emin Pasha.

Twenty years later I called at the Everett house in New York to extend greetings and congratulations to Stanley on his return to America. Major Pond, who had brought Stanley over from London, where he had been lionized and feted for a lecture tour of the United States, ushered me into Stanley's apartment. From the descriptions that had appeared in the London papers after his triumphant return from his African explorations, I had



HENRY M. STANLEY.—From an Autographed Photo Owned by Edward Rosewater.

prepared myself to meet a man turned prematurely old and gray. I was dazed on entering the chamber to see Stanley sitting near a window looking exactly as he did when bidding me goodbye in Omaha. Approaching closer, I found he had dyed his hair and mustache. I extended my hand to him, but he would not shake.

"You have discredited my discovery of Livingstone," said he. "As an Omaha man you ought to have stood up for me anyhow."

"My dear Stanley," said I, "I am not in the habit of writing what I do not believe. I did not believe that you had discovered Livingstone and therefore did not credit you with the discovery. I believe it now because the Royal British Geographical society and Livingstone's relatives have fully confirmed your story."

I had seen Stanley at his desk writing letters descriptive in detail of scenes and incidents in the streets of Denver when he was not within 500 miles of the town, and that is what caused my incredulity about his later exploits and discoveries in Central Africa.

Mollified by my explanation, Stanley got over his huff bravely and after chatting for half an hour invited me to call again the next day for an inscribed autograph edition of his "In Darkest Africa." When I called on Stanley the following morning he had again called for Europe—a cable dispatch from the king of Belgium had called the explorer back to the Congo Free State, and that mission kept him in Africa three years more.

In the fall of 1890 Stanley, who had in the meantime married Dorothy Tennant, famous as an artist and a wealthy English society woman, returned to this country on another lecture tour, accompanied by his wife and her mother, Mrs. Tennant. This time our meeting took place in the press gallery of the house of representatives in the national capitol building, where Stanley had delivered an impromptu speech in response to an address of welcome by the president of the Gridiron club.

Stanley talked and acted then as if he were in a trance. Although he had sent me word that he wanted to see me, he appeared scarcely conscious of my presence during our conversation and was ob-

livious almost of the fact that he was in the capitol. I learned afterward that he had been compelled to resort to opiates to cure an African jungle fever and was not himself during the entire American lecture season. In an informal way he merely expressed the hope that he would meet many of his old friends and acquaintances on revisiting Omaha.

On Christmas eve of the same year, after an absence of twenty-three years, Stanley received a veritable ovation before an enthusiastic Omaha audience of more than 1,800 people, presided over by General John M. Thayer, then governor of Nebraska. The recital of his thrilling adventures in darkest Africa was frequently interrupted by generous applause and especially the closing portion of his lecture, in which he described his last journey of more than 6,000 miles across equatorial Africa from the western ocean to the Indian sea. At the conclusion of his lecture Stanley was presented with a beautiful floral horseshoe bearing the talismanic words, "1867—Welcome—1900," as a gift from the citizens of Omaha to a most distinguished former resident of the Gate City. An informal reception was held upon the stage and hundreds of people availed themselves of the opportunity to greet the famous traveler.

On Christmas morning I found Stanley in his hotel apartments in one of his melancholy moods. Mrs. Stanley and her mother expressed their anxiety to attend divine service in a church of England (Episcopal church), but Stanley declined to accompany them. Volunteering my services as their escort the ladies cheerfully assented.

"Shall we drive to church in a carriage?" I asked.

"No, we prefer to go on foot," said Mrs. Stanley. "We English women like exercise."

So we walked leisurely from the Millard hotel to Trinity Cathedral. Both Mrs. Stanley and Mrs. Tennant appeared to be much interested in Stanley's life in Omaha, by asking various questions. On our return from church we found Stanley in better humor and after luncheon started on a carriage drive. As we passed the block in which were located the old Republican and Omaha's first theater, Stanley, pointing to the building, exclaimed:

"Here is my old stamping ground. There

is the academy of music. What has become of Jane Clara Walters?"

"She is out in Salt Lake," said I.

"And where is Chaplin?"

"He is playing somewhere in the east."

"And where is Annie Ward?"

"She is dead," I responded.

"Dead!" exclaimed Stanley, and he hung his head mournfully without saying a word. Annie Ward was one of the actresses of the theatrical stock company that was stationed in Omaha during Stanley's residence, and he was reputed to have been "dead stuck" on her. Mrs. Stanley appeared oblivious to the conversation.

When we reached The Bee building a reception was awaiting the guest by the Omaha Press club, and once more he seated himself by the old desk he had used as Omaha correspondent. There was emotion visible in his imperturbable features and he could not refrain from expressing appreciation of his cordial treatment, and astonishment at the marvelous growth of Omaha since he had been part of it. Looking backward, Stanley's pathetic forecast of "Greater Omaha," that appeared in the New York Herald on February 4, 1867, over his name is worthy of reproduction in this connection:

"Omaha is situated very nearly on an air line, and almost half way between New York and San Francisco. Her commanding position as terminus of a great railway, destined to carry the great traffic between the Atlantic and Pacific, probably to revolutionize the Japanese and Chinese trade of the world, gives her commercial advantages which sooner or later will make her one of the leading cities of the great northwest."

In the middle of June, the following year, 1891, I availed myself of Stanley's invitation to pay him a visit at his home in London. I had no difficulty in finding his residence on Richmond Terrace, close to Westminster Abbey and opposite to the palace of the Duke Buccleuch.

The striking features of Stanley's London residence were the trophies he had brought home from Africa. The hall and drawing rooms were a veritable museum of weapons of savage African warriors—spears, shields, clubs, bows and arrows, etc. There were also rude implements, headgear and footgear and a great variety of skins, horns, claws and tusks of the wild animals of the African jungle and desert. On the library walls were portraits of Livingstone and other African explorers. Stanley himself appeared to be a changed man. His taciturn and morose disposition had disappeared altogether. His conversation, while not frivolous or gay, was cheerful and amiable. The marked change was manifestly due to the full recovery of his normal health and the disuse of the drugs that had made him so irascible and almost unapproachable during his American tour of the previous year.

During the afternoon luncheon Stanley talked without reserve about his last impressions of America and its future, reverting occasionally to the escapades and misadventures of his early life in the United States, his variegated experiences in the Confederate and Union armies, and especially of his life in Omaha and in the far west. He also indulged in retrospective comparisons between the progress of civilization in America and Africa and their prospective growth in wealth and power.

When asked whether European colonization with its modern civilizing agencies would revolutionize Africa and make it as great and prosperous as the United States of America, he candidly expressed the opinion that it would not, even within many, many centuries, owing to the difference in its climatic conditions and its vast uncultivable area and its tropical native population that is lacking in all the elements of thrift, industry and natural bent toward higher standards of living.

Reverting to his life in America, Stanley expressed his admiration for Americans, and his obligation to them for the inspiration and example of pluck, energy and indomitable will to achieve success. This attachment for America and Americans I feel sure he entertained to the end.

E. ROSEWATER.

