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ALEXANDER



EXTRACT of a LETTER from R. A. ^{Robert Jackson} ALEXANDER, Esq., giving
an Account of a Raid on his Property at Woodburn,
in Kentucky, on the 6th February 1865.

MATTERS have at length become so unsatisfactory, and *life and property* so unsafe in my part of Kentucky, that I have at last come to the determination of leaving my place, taking with me such stock as is likely to be stolen. I have been satisfied for some time that neither life or property were *quite safe*, but the vast expense of so large a move as I should be obliged to make deterred me from the undertaking, till absolutely forced to make it. I believe you heard of the first guerrilla raid made upon me by five rascals, who took a number of horses, who were pursued, and from whom we took all but my race-horse Asteroid. I got a couple of my neighbours, very resolute men, to go over into the hills and get the horse, which was done with little cost, though at some risk, my friends paying the price of a good hack for my horse which the rascals had stolen. After this, I armed my men, and kept six armed watchmen, besides the labourers who could be called into service, making in all from 18 to 20 well armed men, all collected. My watchmen were placed at three points to give the alarm; two at each of the stables, my *training stables* and *stallion stables*, and two at my house.

Just a month ago, between sunset and dark, in the dusk of the evening, one of my men came in, and announced that a number of soldiers were coming down the lane. I ordered the house to be closed and barred up (all the front part, at least), got out the arms, and sent word to the men to be in readiness; by this time, they came in two files into the kitchen yard; I went out to see who they were, and, finding them clad in Federal overcoats, presumed that they were Federal soldiers. With my gun in my hand and a

pistol in my belt, I stepped into the door, and cried, "Halt!" just as the column had gone half by me; they halted and faced about at once, upon which I said, "What will you have, gentlemen?" One of them answered, "We want provender for two hundred horses." I replied, "That is a pretty large order. I have provender in various places, but I have no place in which to feed so many horses." Upon this there was a pause for a brief space, and then another fellow said, "We are out pressing horses." In reply I said, "Show your order to press horses." Upon this, he and the whole line drew their pistols, and he said, "This is our order." I at once saw how the case stood, that they were guerrillas, and that they had me in their power, so, to make the best of a bad case, I said, "Well, I suppose, if you are bound to have horses, there is no necessity of a fight about it, but if you are disposed to have a fight, I have some men here, and we will give you the best fight we can." Upon this an old man, Captain Viley, whom the rascals had as a prisoner and guide, and who has always shown himself my friend, spoke out, and said, "Alexander, for God's sake, let them have the horses; the Captain says he will be satisfied if you will let him have two horses, without a fight, or any trouble." Determined to get out of the scrape as well as I could, and seeing that the scamps had every advantage of me, I said, "If that be the case, the thing can be very easily arranged," and asked who was the captain; a fellow answered that he was. I then asked him if this was the fact, that, if I would give him two horses without a fight, he would leave me and everything unmolested. He answered, "Yes;" and I said in reply, "Then you shall have them, and as I am a man of my word, and consider that my word is as good as my bond, you may consider the matter settled, so let us shake hands on the bargain." I stepped out of the door where I had stood during this time, and passed through the first rank, and shook hands with the fellow. Thinking that the matter was arranged, I went back to the door, when the fellow said, "March out your men, and deliver up your arms." I answered, "We have made a

bargain, and I am to give you two horses. You shall have the horses, but I will neither march out my men nor give up my arms." He then said, "Well, deliver up your arms, anyhow." I replied, "Captain, I have these arms for my own protection. You said that if I would give you two horses without a contest, you would be satisfied to leave everything unmolested. I have agreed to let you have the horses, and I am going to keep my arms, but I assure you that a gun shall not be fired. However, to assure you that I am acting in good faith, I will send my arms into the house." His reply was, "Do so, then, and if a gun is fired, I will burn up your whole place." I said to him, that if a gun should be fired it would be his fault. I then went half way up the long passage from the kitchen to the dining-room, and handed my gun and pistol to some of the servants who were there, telling them to put them away. D. S. (who, with his family, have been staying with me since the former raid) did the same with his gun and pistol; but Nugent retained his arms and concealed himself, I know not where.

On returning to the kitchen door, the Captain of the guerrilla band said, "Where are those horses? I am in a hurry." I answered, "They are in the stable there," pointing to the stable close to the house. "Come, then," said he, "let us go to the stable," upon which we all started for the stable. As we were going off, I said, "This is rather bad walking" (as it had been raining more or less for several days, and the mud was about ankle deep); one of the fellows good-naturedly said, "Get up behind me." To make a joke of the matter, and to try to get upon as good terms as possible with them, I said, "Well, put your foot out of the stirrup, and I will do so." He took his foot from the stirrup, and I mounted behind him, and thus we moved towards the stables. We had gone only a few steps when the horse began to kick pretty violently, upon which *my friend* said, "I reckon you had better get down." I answered that I had no objection, and so dismounted; a few steps brought us to the stable near the house, where I had a pair of thorough-bred mares, well broken to harness,

a thorough-bred horse I used as a saddle horse, a *very fine animal*, and some two or three others of less value. There I told the Captain that we should find one of the animals I proposed to give him. He inquired if it was a good one. I said "Yes, as good as could be found." He then asked if I had not a horse called the bald horse, meaning a horse with a white in his face. I answered, that I had several horses answering this description. He said, "I mean a horse known as the bald horse." I saw at once that the rascal was well informed as to my horse stock, and said, "I had such a horse." He then said that he must have him. I stated to him that this horse was a good trotting horse, one that was valuable to me, but of comparatively little use to him, and that I had twenty horses that I could give him better suited to his use. He replied, that he must have him. Again I urged, that the horse was only valuable as a trotter, and though valuable to me, and one for which I could get a good price as a fast trotting horse, yet quite unsuited to his use. He at length said, that if the horse was one that was valuable to me, he was valuable to him, and that he must have him. I then asked, if he took the horse I first proposed to give him and this one, if he intended to take any of my race-horses. He replied, that he must have *two of them*.

Having ascertained that these rascals did not intend complying with the agreement made with me as to the horses they were going to take, I remembered a letter of warning I had received, some two or three weeks before, informing me that a band of guerrillas would make a raid on me, and, after taking many of my best horses, intended taking me off, with the object of getting a ransom from me for my release, and I determined to give them the slip, if possible. I said to the Captain, that the bald horse was in my trotting stable on the opposite hill, pointing to the stable, and that my man Hull had the key. He desired that Hull should be sent for, upon which I volunteered to go for him, which he permitted. I went off to the brick house, close at hand, where the men boarded, and found

Hull putting on his boots, which he had pulled off on getting to the house from the stables. I said to him that these men had asked for the bald horse, and so insisted on having him that I feared we would be obliged to give him to them, but if he could give them any other horse in his place he must do so, and then started with him from the brick house. As he went through the kitchen yard, he said, "I think Henry has the key of that stable." I at once said I would look up Henry, and leaving him went towards the kitchen door; there I found four horses, two with riders on them and two with empty saddles, I thought two of the fellows had gone in for water, though, when I passed into the kitchen, I did not see them. Those at the door did not say anything to me as I passed by them. I proceeded through the kitchen, up the long passage to the dining-room, and, upon getting to the dining-room door, found two of the guerrillas there, one with his back to me and near the door, the other opposite to me and nearer the outer door, which opens into the porch towards the garden, which door I had had barred up; the man nearest me had his pistol cocked and presented at Mrs. S., who, I think, had a child in her arms, and who stood near the fireplace; at the same time he ordered her to get the rest of the arms, which order I heard as I entered; the other man, farthest from me and who faced me, had his arms full of guns of all sorts, which he had got from the table where S.'s and my arms had been put by the servants, and from the corners of the room, where stood my father's old rifle, that he had brought from Virginia with him when he came a settler to Kentucky, one of Alic's, and some two or three of mine, of *various sorts and sizes*. He seemed quite loaded down with guns. The other occupants of the room were the nurse, who had a child in her arms, and little Mary S., both of whom, as well as Mrs. S., were nearly frightened to death.

Hearing the fellow order Mrs. S. to get the rest of the arms, I stepped into the room and got between the two men; taking a hasty look at the man with the guns, who seemed rather a good-natured sort of fellow, I faced the man with the pistol, and said, in a firm tone, "The Captain says, if I will give

him two horses, without a fight or any trouble, I can keep my arms, and I am going to keep them." As soon as I said this, the fellow faced half about, and, presenting his pistol at my breast, about 18 inches off, said, "D— you, deliver up the rest of those arms, or I will shoot you." As quick as thought, I knocked the pistol away from the line of my body, and seized the fellow; I saw in an instant that he had been drinking just about enough to make him do anything, and this seemed the only course I had to take. We stood close to the door which opens into the passage, and I made an effort to throw him out of the room, fearing the pistol might go off and shoot some one in the room. I was unable to throw him out at the first effort, but as I had seized him in a way that I had my left shoulder against his right shoulder, and was thus somewhat behind him, in making the effort his *right knee* came in contact with *my left*; and it instantly occurred to me that I should trip him; so, lifting him, I advanced my left leg, and throwing my whole weight against him, at the same moment giving him a twist to the left, we fell together out of the door and into the passage, about eight or nine inches lower than the floor of the dining-room. I had a little the best of the fall, as he was undermost, and in attempting to rise he called to the other man to shoot me, that I was killing him. I took a hasty glance at the man who stood with his arms full of guns, who seemed taken quite by surprise by my actions. He, in answer to the other fellow, said, "He is not armed; he cannot hurt you much." Just then we rose together, I still holding on to the fellow with the same grip, my arms encircling him just at the elbow joint, so as to pinion him; the fellow made a violent effort to get away, and again called out to the other to shoot me; as I saw that he might get loose from me and would most certainly shoot me if he did, I made up my mind to give him another fall, just as the other called out to me, "Let him go, Mr. Alexander." I said, "I will not let him go; he will shoot me, as I have no arms." Again the fellow made an effort to get loose, and giving him the benefit of my knee a second time, down we came together, I still

retaining my grasp on him ; this time we fell against an iron safe placed opposite the dining-room door, and against the wall in the passage, my elbow rubbing against the door of the safe, and his arm, in the hand of which he held his pistol, must have struck the edge or corner of the safe, for the fellow said, that I had broken his arm (which, however, was not the case). Again we rose up together, for I could not hold him down, though I could retain my hold on him, which I had at first taken, and, just as we were about rising, the man with the guns said again, " Let him go," adding, that he would protect me. As we rose, I said, " Do you promise me on the *word and honour of a gentleman*, that you will protect me?" He said, " I will," or " I do," and thinking that this was as good a bargain as I was likely to be able to make, I let him go ; he made a strong effort to get away just as I released him, and I, at the same time, gave him a shove, so that he went through the door towards the kitchen ; the other fellow stepped in between us, and kept him moving till they turned into the kitchen. I watched them till they disappeared from the passage, and following them quickly, bolted the middle door between the passages, and also the door through which I shoved the fellow, and returning to the dining-room, where I found Mrs. S., the nurse and the children, I told her not to open the doors on any account, and if the fellows should return and inquire for me, to say that I had gone out.

This done, I passed to the front part of the house, and out through the door of the little dressing-room which you had when at Woodburn. I went at once to the upper part of the garden, hoping to see what the rascals were at, from thence ; but it had begun to grow dark, and I only saw that they had made a fire of straw, &c., in front of my trotting tables, and were getting the horses out. I then hastened to Lexington's stables, and told my man there to take out such animals as were most valuable, that they were likely to steal ; I also sent a boy to the training stable to tell the trainer to remove most of the valuable horses ; but before the boy got there, a portion of the rascals had got there and taken out four horses. They asked for " Asteroid," but

in the dusk of the evening, the trainer gave them an inferior horse, and so saved the best horse in my stable; they got "Norwich," brother to Norfolk, however, a four year old mare, that was a good one, and a three year old filly by "Lexington," which we think well of, besides the colt they mistook for "Asteroid," making four from my race stable; they also got four from my trotting stable, and four from my riding-horse stable, and three more from various places, making 15 horses in all. The most valuable of the whole was the trotting horse the Captain of the band seemed to be so anxious to get hold of, and he was worth fully as much as any horse I own, except "Lexington" himself; and, I doubt, if I would have taken 15,000 dollars in greenbacks for him; the second most valuable, was my trotting stallion "Abdallah;" both these are dead, the first from a wound in the hock; the second, being captured by the Federals, was ridden to death by a Federal soldier; the third in value, "Norwich," was still in the hands of the guerrillas, when I last heard from home. Six horses and mares are still missing, including the two which are dead, and their value is not less than 32,000 dollars.

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