



THE CIVIL WAR ROUND-TABLE

P. O. BOX 5028, CLEVELAND, OHIO 44101

MAY 1974

Vol. 17 No. 9

145th Meeting

DATE: TUESDAY, MAY 14, 1974 ...LADIES NIGHT....

SPEAKER: SILENT

SUBJECT: MOVIE: "THE GENERAL" w/ Buster Keaton

PLACE: THE LAST MOTION PICTURE COMPANY
EUCLID AVE AT PLAYHOUSE SQUARE

(THE OLD STOUFFER'S PLAYHOUSE REST)

PRELIMINARIES: 6:30 PM DINNER 7:30 PM

Cost \$11.00 per person

THE GENERAL

A real treat is in store for the Round Table at its May meeting. The movie, "The General" starring Buster Keaton, will be shown. This film is one of the old silent flickers and the old timers in the Round Table will be excused if they become a bit struck with nostalgia at the thought of seeing it.

The movie was shot in 1926, and released throughout the country in 1927. In March of 1926, W.H. Barnes, assistant director for Buster Keaton Productions, contacted the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce indicating that they planned to shoot a movie about the Andrews Raid during the Civil War. They hoped to shoot it on the actual locale between Big Shanty, Georgia, and Ringgold, and use the engine "The General" that had figured in the actual chase.

The "General" was then owned by the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway (now a part of the L & N) and the railroad agreed to let Keaton use it and shoot the film along their railroad in Georgia. The NC & St. L removed the old engine from the Chattanooga Union Station where it had been on display since 1893, put it in operating condition, and on a trial run, it did 60 miles per hour.

Several ancient railroad cars were rigged up for use by Keaton, who also had built models at his studio in California for shipment to Chattanooga. On April 9, 1926, word circulated in Chattanooga that Keaton and a part of his production staff was due in town to set up shooting schedules.

Up to that point, Keaton's organization had stated that the comedian was going to step out of his usual role and play a serious part. "The film is going to be as historically accurate as it can possibly be made," they said. Keaton's studio leased a small logging road in Eastern Tennessee for use in portions of the shooting. Keaton's studio personnel and equipment began to arrive in Chattanooga. During an interview on arrival Keaton said: "I'm a comedian and I think I'd better stick to the craft I know best. Our film, 'The General' will be shot as a comedy."

Confederates throughout the South rose in protest. Among them was a relative of Conductor Fuller, who had so gallantly chased and caught the engine that day in 1862. A conference among Grand Army of the Republic members and various Confederate veterans

brought a vigorous protest to the Nashville headquarters of the NC & StL Railway co, demanding that the railroad withdraw permission to use the engine if Keaton was to film the story of the Great Locomotive Chase as a comedy. Pressure became so intense that the NC & StL withdrew permission. Keaton packed up and returned to California without exposing even a foot of film. In June 1926, an official of the NC & StL received a letter which read in part: "It is with regret that we find ourselves compelled to give up the idea of making our picture in the South. We have been fortunate in being able to secure two engines almost identical with the "General" and have decided to make our picture on the Coast. . ."

Shooting got under way in mid-summer of 1926 at Cottage Grove, Oregon, in an area along the Row River. Substituting for the "General" was No. 4, a 4-4-0 type owned by the old Oregon & Southeastern Railroad. Except for smaller drivers and a slightly different stack, it looked a great deal like the "General". The locomotive that played the part of the "Texas" was No. 1 of the Mt. Hood Railroad. During the shooting of a burning bridge sequence, this engine fell to the river below, where its rusting hulk is said to be today.

"The General" opened at Loew's Grand Theater in Atlanta on February 17, 1927, and played to capacity audiences during its run in Atlanta. There were threats of a boycott in some Southern cities, including Atlanta, but it was a hit anyway. Keaton who was a very funny man indeed, died February 1, 1966, age 70, in his Hollywood home.

THE FILM IN CLEVELAND, OHIO

The first Cleveland showing of the film took place the week of Sunday, February 20, 1927, at the Allen Theater. That same week film fans had their choice of seeing: At the STILLMAN theater was John Barrymore in "Don Juan"; the PALACE was showing Charles Ray and Marie Prevost in "Getting Gertie's Garter"; nearby at the STATE a rescorcher, "Taxi Dancer" w/ Joan Crawford; down the avenue at the HIPPODROME, a shoote up with Hoot Gibson, called "The Texas Streak"; and the CIRCLE theater had Cleveland's own Adolph Menjou and Ricardo Cortez in "Sorrow of Satan"; and finally out in the suburbs of Superior & St. Clair and 105th street at Loew's LIBERTY or Loew's DOAN theaters you could watch Lillian Gish in the "Scarlet Letter."

For those of you who can't quite recall W. Ward Marsh's review in the CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER, sit back, relax and refresh your memory. It's Monday morning, February 21, 1927, and your drinking your second cup of coffee as you read Marsh's headline on page 15:

KEATON, A REBEL, HAS FUN IN SOUTH

"The funny side of the Civil War comes late. The World War has offered its mirth first, considering the age of each on the pages of history. America suffered, as probably you know, frightfully from the debauch of the 60's, and it has taken a few generations to forget some of the grief and sorrow and try to find its funny side.

If America had sustained such frightful losses during '17 & '18 I dare say we wouldn't have found the World War's humor yet, but we are moving faster these days, and it is altogether possible the speed of youth and later inventions would have erased enough of the tears to permit a laugh to spring out of the sorrow we, as a whole, never had.

....Keaton in his 'General' pursues the northerners spies into their own territory after they have stolen an engine and kidnaped his sweetheart, played by Marian Mack. He is nearly captured a half dozen times, but he manages to rescue the girl and drive his 'General' back to camp, burn a bridge and foil an attack.

That's all there is to the story. Considerable horse-play of a pretty familiar variety finds its way into the text. The chase to the north is quite exciting, but it is largely repeated when the hero escapes to the south. If you think you will laugh when a water tank floods passing engineers and passengers, the 'General' is for you.

It struck me as being too repetitious and too long, but don't be governed wholly by my opinion unless you know that your likes and mine coincide because I'm going to recommend it--not, because I was, immensely charmed by it, but because I know that the majority will find excitement, nicely maintained suspense, and good gags; the minority will laugh infrequently."

THE COURIER
of
THE CIVIL WAR ROUNDTABLE OF CLEVELAND

FOUNDED FEBRUARY 19, 1957

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LETTERS TO THE EDITORS OF CENTURY MAGAZINE

We all find a sort of fascination in reading the "Letters to the Editor" column because we usually discover more of the 'other side' of the story than by reading the original. Well the editors of CENTURY MAGAZINE were not immune to such letters. In reading some of the old articles that later appeared in BATTLES AND LEADERS I discovered a few letters that should be shared. In fact the lead "letter" was by the editors themselves on an article that I used several months ago...read & remember!

"LIFE ON THE ALABAMA."

Since the February number of the magazine went to press we have learned, for the first time, from his own admission, that "P.D. Haywood," the author of the article "Life on the ALABAMA---By one of the Crew," which appeared in THE CENTURY for April, 1886, was not a seaman on the Confederate cruiser, though at the time the article was accepted he assured us he was, and furnished references which seemed to be satisfactory. He now claims that he had the incidents of his paper from a member of the ALABAMA'S crew, but we are unable to attach any importance to that statement, and shall omit his article from the war papers when they are republished in book form.-
EDITOR.

GENERAL WARREN ON LITTLE ROUND TOP.
A letter from his widow.....

In General Hunt's paper in the December CENTURY, the account of the occupation of Little Round Top is introduced in the following words:

"As soon as Longstreet's attack commenced, General Warren was sent by General Meade to see to Little Round Top," etc.

Truth and history require me to say that when General Warren, at the action of the 2d of July, was sent, at his own suggestion, to the left, it was with no specific reference on General Meade's part to Little Round Top. As bearing on this point, I transcribe from a letter dated July 13, 1872, from General Warren, the following:

"Just before the action began in earnest on July 2d, I was with General Meade, near General Sickles, whose troops seemed very badly disposed on that part of the field. At my suggestion, General Meade sent me to the left to examine the condition of affairs, and I continued on till I reached Little Round Top. There were no troops on it, and it was used as a signal station. I saw that this was the key of the whole position, and that our troops in the woods in front of it could not see the ground in front of them, so that the enemy would come upon them before they would be aware of it. The long line of woods on the west side of the Emmettsburg road (which road was along a ridge)

furshed an excellent place for the enemy to form out of sight, so I requested the captain of a rifle battery just in front of Little Round Top to fire a shot into these woods. He did so, and as the shot went whistling through the air the sound of it reached the enemy's troops and caused every one to look in the direction of it. This motion revealed to me the glistening of gun-barrels and bayonets of the enemy's line of battle, already formed and far out-flanking the position of any of our troops; so that the line of his advance from his right to Little Round Top was unopposed. I have been particular in telling this, as the discovery was intensely thrilling to my feelings, and almost appalling. I immediately sent a hastily written dispatch to General Meade to send a division at least to me, and General Meade directed the Fifth Army Corps to take position there. The battle was already beginning to rage at the Peach Orchard, and before a single man reached Round Top the whole line of the enemy moved on us in splendid array, shouting in most confident tones. While I was still all alone with the signal officer, the musket-balls began to fly around us, and he was about to fold up his flags and withdraw, but remained, at my request, and kept waving them in defiance. Seeing troops going out on the Peach Orchard road. I rode down the hill, and fortunately met my old brigade. General Weed, commanding it, had already passed the point, and I took the responsibility to detach Colonel O'Rorke, the head of whose regiment I struck, who, on hearing my few words of explanation about the position, moved at once to the hill-top. About this time First Lieutenant Charles E. Hazlett of the Fifth Artillery, with his battery of rifled cannon, arrived. He comprehended the situation instantly and planted a gun on the summit of the hill. He spoke to the effect that though he could do little execution on the enemy with his guns, he could aid in giving confidence to the infantry, and that his battery was of no consequence whatever compared with holding the position. He staid there till he was killed. I was wounded with a musketball while talking with Lieutenant Hazlett on the hill, but not seriously; and, seeing the position saved while the whole line to the right and front of us was yielding and melting away under the enemy's fire and advance, I left the hill to rejoin General Meade near the center of the field, where a new crisis was at hand."

I would not claim for General Warren that he did more than his duty, but that he should have whatever of credit is due for the heroic resolution to accept so grave a responsibility, and an appreciation of the inspiration or genius which recognized this to be a turning-point of that supreme battle. This is conceded to General Warren by Swinton, General Abbot, Comte de Paris, General F.A. Walker, and other historians.

EMILY F. WARREN

GENERAL HANCOCK AND THE ARTILLERY AT GETTYSBURG

General Hunt, in his article on "The Third Day at Gettysburg," criticises Gen. Hancock's conduct of his artillery, on the ground that his directing the Second Corps batteries to continue firing through the Confederate cannonade was both an encroachment upon his own (General Hunt's) proper authority, as chief of artillery of the Army of the Potomac, and an act of bad policy. On the latter point he says:

"Had my instructions been followed here, as they were by McGilvery, I do not believe that Pickett's division would have reached our line. We lost not only the fire of one-third of our guns, but the resulting cross-fire, which would have doubled its value."

This, it will be seen, constitutes a very severe impeachment. I have had much correspondence and conversation with General Hancock on the subject; and, as the heroic leader of the Second Corps can no longer reply for himself, I beg leave to speak on his behalf.

In the first place, two antagonistic theories of authority are advanced. General Hancock claimed that he commanded the line of battle along Cemetery Ridge. General Hunt, in substance, alleges that General Hancock commanded the infantry of that line; and that he himself commanded the artillery.

Winfield S. Hancock did not read his commission as constituting him a major-general of infantry; nor did he believe that a line of battle was to be ordered by military specialists. He knew that by both law and reason the defense of Cemetery Ridge was intrusted to him, subject to the actual, authentic orders of the commander of the Army of the Potomac, but not subject to the discretion of one of General Meade's staff-officers. General Meade could, under the President's order, have placed a junior at the head of the Second Corps; but whomever he did place over the corps became thereby invested with the whole undiminished substance, and with all the proper and ordinary incidents of command.

So much for the question of authority. On the question of policy there is only to be said that a difference of opinion appears between two highly meritorious officers--one, the best artillerist of the army; the other, one of the best, if not the best, commander of troops in the army--as to what was most expedient in a given emergency. Unquestionably it would have been a strong point for us, if, other things equal, the limber chests of the artillery had been full when Pickett's and Pettigrew's divisions began their great charge. But would other things have been equal? Would the advantage so obtained have compensated for the loss of morale in the infantry which might have resulted from allowing them to be scourged, at will, by the hostile artillery? Every soldier knows how trying and often demoralizing it is to endure artillery fire without reply.

Now, on the question thus raised, who was the better judge, General Hunt or General Hancock? Had Henry J. Hunt taken command of a brigade of infantry in 1861, had he for nearly two years lived with the infantry, marching with them, camping among them, commanding them in numerous actions, keeping close watch of their temper and spirit, observing their behavior under varying conditions and trials, I believe that he would, by the 3d of July, 1863, have become one of the most capable and judicious corps commanders of the army. But in so doing he would necessarily have forfeited nearly all of that special experience which combined with his high intelligence and great spirit to make him one of the best artillerists whom the history of war has known. Certainly a service almost wholly in the artillery could not yield that intimate knowledge of the temper of troops which should qualify him, equally with Hancock, to judge what was required to keep them in heart and courage, under the Confederate cannonade at Gettysburg, and to bring them up to the final struggle, prepared in spirit to meet the fearful ordeal of Longstreet's charge. Hancock had full authority over that line of battle; he used that authority according to his own best judgment, and he beat off the enemy. That is the substance of it.

Boston, Jan 12, 1887

Francis A. Walker

MORE LIGHT ON "THE RESERVE AT ANTIETAM"

After reading the article of Colonel Thomas M. Anderson on the above subject in the September (1886) number of THE CENTURY and the reply of General Porter in the January (1887) number, I feel as if a word or two on the subject might clear up a little of the obscurity connected therewith. The note in question may have been delivered as stated, but that Captain Dryer did not reach the enemy's lines by three hundred or four hundred yards, I know personally, for I had to go to him at the farthest point of his advance. In this, therefore, some one seems to have been mistaken, as well as in the object for which the Second, Fourth, and a battalion of the Twelfth United States regiments were sent across Antietam Creek. As Adjutant-General of the First Brigade of Regulars, I was ordered to detail a regiment to support (I think it was) Tidball's battery, which had been ordered, and was about to take position on the Boonsboro' pike, on the Sharpsburg side of the bridge over Antietam Creek, near J. Meyer's house. The roster decided that the Twelfth should be the regiment, and Captain (now Colonel) M.M. Blunt, who was in command, was ordered to do the work.

Tidball went into position, and I believe had eight or ten horses killed before he could fire a shot--even if he did fire one. It was madness to stay there, however.

for the little good to be accomplished, and he withdrew. At the first onslaught I was ordered to send another regiment, and the lot fell to the Fourth Infantry, commanded by Captain Hiram Dryer, who was senior to all the other officers on that side of the creek. When he obtained the position where Tidball was supposed to be, the battery was not there; but the location for the regiments was a good one, and being less subject to the enemy's fire where they were than where they had been, no order was given for their withdrawal, General Sykes supposing that in the absence of proper orders to advance the troops would remain quiet. Gallant and impetuous as Dryer always was, he could not remain idle, and it was soon observed that he was pushing his men forward on each side of the pike towards the crest occupied by the enemy, with a view, as it was afterwards understood, to charge and take a battery there.

Having observed this, and knowing it was not the intention, nor could we afford, at that particular time, to make any forward movement on the center, I reported this to Generals Sykes and Buchanan, who were together at the time, and I was directed by General Sykes to proceed at once to the advanced position which Captain Dryer had obtained (being within three hundred or four hundred yards of the enemy's batteries) and direct him to withdraw his troops immediately to the original position at the head of the bridge, and then to report in person to General Sykes. During my absence at the front, I believe, the note in question was received. When Dryer reported, those who were present know that the interview was in no wise a subject of consultation.

Had Captain Dryer been permitted to make the charge he was contemplating, his regiments, which we from our position could (but he could not) see, would have found, instead of a single battery, some eighteen guns covering their front, and he would never have been able to reach them; and he could never have returned, after an unsuccessful charge, because he was nearly a mile away from any support whatever. His men would have been annihilated by the concentrated fire that the enemy could have poured upon his small force. It was confidently believed, however, by the two brigades of regular infantry that if they had been thrown forward at any time towards the close of the day of the 17th, supported by Morell's division, they could have carried the center, and thus could have enabled General Burnside to drive the enemy from the field on the left.

Wm. H. Powell,
Captain Fourth U.S. Infantry

Boise Barracks, Idaho, Jan 4, 1887.

IN THE RANKS AT FREDERICKSBURG.

General W. F. Smith, in his article on "Franklin's Left Grand Division," makes mention of a "round shot that ripped open a soldier's knapsack and distributed his clothing and cards." It was not a round shot, but the second shot that came from the Whitworth gun that the "Johnnies" ran in on our flank. And although we were surprised and dumfounded at this attack from a new arm that appeared to take in about five miles of our line, the boys could not forego their little joke; so when that column of cards was thrown some twenty feet in the air, on all sides could be heard the cry, "Oh, deal me a hand!"

Three other shots in that battle did queer work. Ours was the last brigade (the "Iron Brigade") to cross on the pontoons, and we came to a halt upon the river bank, for a few moments, before going into position among the big cotton-wood trees at the Bernard House. We had been paid off that day, and the gamblers began to play at cards the moment we halted. A man who was about to "straddle" a "fifty-cent blind" had his knapsack knocked from under him by a solid shot, and he "straddled" half a dozen soldiers, who were covered with a cart-load of dirt. This was the first shot from the "Johnnies" on our left. Their second shot passed over the river and struck a paymaster's tent. The struggle between that paymaster and the stragglers for possession of the flying greenbacks was both exciting and ridiculous.

The next day, December 13th, our officers and the enemy's batteries kept us on the jump. During a moment's halt, behind a slight rise of ground, we lay down. A soldier facing to the rear was in earnest conversation with a comrade. Suddenly he made a terrific leap in the air, and from the spot of ground on which he had been sitting a solid shot scooped a wheelbarrow load of dirt. It was a clear case of premonition, for the man could give no reason for having jumped.

General Smith also speaks of "the Veterans' ridicule of the bounty men." The Twenty-fourth Michigan became part of our brigade shortly after Antietam, and we soon learned they were mostly bounty men. We made unmerciful sport of them, but never a word of joke or abuse did I hear after the Twenty-fourth had shown its mettle in this battle of which General Smith writes.

On the evening of December 14th, General Doubleday wanted our regiment (the Second Wisconsin) to go on picket and make an effort to stop the firing upon the picket line, for the shots of the Confederates covered the whole field and no one could get any rest. We had not been in the picket line more than twenty minutes before we made a bargain with the "Rebs," and the firing ceased, and neither they nor ourselves pretended to keep under cover. But at daylight the Twenty-fourth Michigan came to relieve us. Before they were fairly in line they opened fire upon the Confederates without the warning we had agreed to give. We yelled lustily, but the rattle of musketry drowned the sound, and many a confiding enemy was hit. This irritated the Confederates, who opened a savage fire, and the Twenty-fourth Michigan (the bounty men) were put upon their good behavior; so it was with difficulty a general engagement was prevented. All that day, until about four o'clock, the picket-firing was intense, but was abruptly ended by a Confederate challenging a Sixth Wisconsin man to a fist encounter in the middle of the turnpike. The combatants got the attention of both picket lines, who declared the fight "a draw." They ended the matter with a coffee and tobacco trade and an agreement to do no more firing at picket lines, unless an advance was ordered. It was this agreement that enabled Lieutenant Rogers to save a long picket line that was to have been sacrificed when we fell back.

Racine, Wis., Oct. 3, 1886.

George E. Smith
Late Private Co. E, 2d Wis. Vols.

A SONG IN CAMP.

The article on the "Songs of the War," by Mr. Brander Matthews, in THE CENTURY MAGAZINE for August, brought back to my memory vividly an experience at Murfreesboro, just after the battle of Stone's River. There was a good deal of gloomy feeling there. The losses in the army had been terrible; and, besides, there were among the troops a large number of Kentucky and Tennessee regiments, to whom the Emancipation Proclamation was not palatable. A number of officers had resigned, or tendered resignations, on account of it. One day a whole batch of resignations came in, all written in the same handwriting and coming from one regiment, including nearly all the officers in it, assigning as a reason their unwillingness to serve longer in consequence of the change in the purpose and conduct of the war. The instigator of these letters was found, and dismissed with every mark of ignominy--his shoulder straps were cut off, and he was drummed out of camp. This heroic remedy caused the officers whom he had misled to withdraw their resignations; but the thing rankled. A few days afterward a glee club came down from Chicago, bring with them the new song,

"We 'll rally round the flag, boys,"

and it ran through the camp like wildfire. The effect was little short of miraculous. It put as much spirit and cheer into the army as a victory. Day and night one could hear it by every camp fire and in every tent. I never shall forget how the men rolled out the line,

"And although he may be poor, he shall never be a slave."

I do not know whether Mr. Root knows what good work his song did for us there--but I hope so.

Henry Stone

"SHOOTING INTO LIBBY PRISON"

I was surprised at the denial of shooting into Libby Prison, on page 153 of the November CENTURY, because I was so unfortunate as to be compelled to stay a short time at that notorious place and had a personal experience with the shooting. Our

squad reached the prison one April night in 1863. Early next morning we new arrivals anxious to become better acquainted with the rebel capital, filled the windows and with outstretched necks sniffed the fresh air. Three of my comrades were kneeling with elbows resting on the window-sill, quietly looking out. I stood with my hand on the top of a window-frame, looking out over their heads, when bang went a gun, and a bullet came whizzing close to my head and sunk deep into the casing within six inches of my hand. Nothing saved one of our number from death but the poor aim of the guard, who was nearly under us, and to whom we were paying no attention. We were told by those who had been there some time that it was the habit of the guard to shoot in that way to keep prisoners from leaning out of the windows.

Albert H. Hollister
Company F 22nd Wisconsin; 1st Lieutenant,
Co. K, 30th United States Colored
Troops/

I entered Libby a prisoner of war, October 10, 1863, much weakened by our long trip in box cars from Chattanooga, and having been forty-eight hours without rations. To escape the stifling air inside I seated myself in an open window on the second floor. One of my comrades, having more experience, made a grab for me and "yanked" me out, exclaiming, "My God, man, do you want to die?" "What's up now?" I said. "Look there!" Peeping over the window-sill, I saw the guard just removing his gun from his shoulder. "What does this mean?" I said. "We had no orders we get here," he answered. I went through Richmond, Danville, "Camp Sumpter" (Andersonville), Charleston, and Florence, and during this experience, covering a period of fourteen months and thirteen days, I never heard instructions that we might do this or might not do that. Our first intimation of the violation of a rule was to see the guard raising his gun to his shoulder. They did not always fire, but often they did.

Upper Alton, Illinois

J.T. King
115th Illinois Volunteers

AN ANECDOTE OF THE PETERSBURG CRATER.

I was in Virginia in 1864, and the paragraph in General Grant's Vicksburg paper describing the mine explosion and the frightened negro who was lifted "'bout t'ree mile" brings to my mind the mining of the Confederate works before Petersburg in the summer of 1864. Among the prisoners captured was one whose face was greatly begrimed, and as he marched by he was saluted by a blue-coat with the remark, "Say Johnnie! guess you got blown up." "Well," replied Johnny with an oath, "I should just say so; but somehow I got the start of the other fellows, for when I was coming down I met the regiment going up, and they all called me a blasted straggler!"

Henry R. Howland

/Buffalo, September 7th, 1885.

WAGONS HO!

The Standard Army Wagon, in the Civil War, was 10 feet long, 43 inches wide, 22 inches deep, and carried between 2,536 and 4,000 pounds-authorities vary. The front wheels were smaller than the rear ones to shorten the turning radius, and it was drawn by four horses or six mules. Army trains carried forage for the "prime movers" and also portable forges and boxes of blacksmith's weehlwright's and saddler's tools. Of necessity, wagon trains were large and might extend along a road for 25 mile. To march 100,000 men overland for 10 days without rail or waterborne supply might require 10,000 wagons and 60,000 mules.

In the Peninsular Campaign, the Army of the Potomac (80,000 men) required 3,100 wagons, 350 ambulances, 17,000 horses, 8,000 mules, or about 40 wagons per 1,000 men. When Sherman advanced from Chattanooga he had 60 wagons per thousand, but on the march from Atlanta to Savannah he reduced this to 40 per thousand.