

Sidelights on the History of Louisiana.

By MRS. S. B. ELDER.

LOUIS ALFRED WILTZ.

This honored governor is really one of Louisiana's heroes, for at the early age of 13 he enrolled his name among the defenders of the South, and was even placed in command of a company.

His father was also a captain in the same regiment as the son, but his health was not as strong as his patriotism, and an insidious fever compelled him to return to his home. The ravages of the disease were unending, and soon the son, from his distant post, heard of his father's approaching death.

So strong was his sense of duty as a soldier that Captain Wiltz hesitated in regard to his yearning as a son, and would not leave his command for his father's deathbed until his brother-officers and superior authority urged him to do so.

The father, as true a hero as the son, gave his final blessing to the young commander and bade him return to his post of duty. As he was stationed at the quarantine post, below the city, he hired a skiff in which to descend the river.

That same day his father died—and Captain Wiltz heard also that the Federal ships had entered the passes of the Mississippi. Returning to Chalmette, he brought the news of the invasion, and his regiment being captured, he hurried to the city, attended his father's funeral, and then left the city, which he could not save—never to return until the surrender of the last Confederate force.

He joined the cavalry of the Trans-Mississippi Department and commanded a body of scouts from different regiments, and while thus acting he acquired much knowledge of the enemy's movements and captured many prisoners.

His unflinching kindness to all who fell into his hands was known to friend and foe. It is even recorded that he once gave his only blanket to a badly wounded Federal, who repaid him with curses loud and deep. But other acts of consideration on the part of Captain Wiltz to his enemy changed the latter into a devoted friend.

When Shreveport was awaiting General Shreve's attack, Captain Wiltz crossed the Cano River to learn the strength and whereabouts of the advancing army. While reconnoitering in the dark he and his handful of men were not by a volley which killed every man with him, but he miraculously escaped from bullets and pursuers, until he had put the river between himself and the Federals.

He had the good fortune once to capture, while commanding the advance pickets on the Teche, not only many prisoners, but also 200 head of cattle—a boon to the half-starved Confederates.

His humanity and bravery were also shown in the town of Patterson when, with twelve men, he withstood the attack of a mob upon the life of an obnoxious citizen, and carried the offender off to a place of safety.

In 1867, the war in the field being over, he entered the lists in the Legislature of his State, and there neutralized some of its infamous tax features.

The Conway School bid was another scheme he defeated, a scheme which would have imposed a million dollars of taxes on the people, besides forcing the white students to admit the colored children on an equality.

His course was one continued opposition to all the tyrannical measures of the radical party.

Young as he was, only 24 (he was born in 1843, and this was in 1867), the people, in admiration of his wisdom and moderation, elected him to the Board of Aldermen, and the same year he was unanimously nominated for mayor of New Orleans. The Legislature, however, prevented his election. Chosen again in 1870, he was again counted out; then, in 1872, he was re-elected and "held his post." It is recorded, "under the most trying municipal administration the city had ever witnessed."

He was nominated for a second term, and was the undoubted choice of the larger part of the citizens of New Orleans. Again fraud and violence were used against him; when, for the sake of harmony, he declined to assert his rights, proving that he loved his State more than he loved himself.

He was speaker of the House on the day memorable in Louisiana history, Jan. 4, 1875, when United States soldiers, with loaded muskets, invaded the people's rights and removed several members from their seats.

Mr. Wiltz protested in these words: "Our brother-members have been seized and torn from us, troops march up the hall and the chair of the speaker of the House of Representatives is now surrounded. I call upon the members to retire."

Mr. Wiltz, self-possessed and dignified, left the building, followed by all the conservative members and leaving the military in charge of the vacated benches.

The leader of this Cromwellian usurpation of legislative rights was a native-born Louisianian, General Regis de Trobriand, but his heart was full of animosity against the Southland, and this he displayed in word and deed.

In his book, entitled "Four Years in the Army of the Potomac," written in French, he brings one of the foulest accusations ever heard against the Confederate government.

On page 338, volume 2, he says, without quoting authorities or statistics, that:

"The government at Richmond had organized a plot to burn all Northern hotels * * * and not satisfied with this ignoble scheme, had systematically caused to be conveyed along the Northern people—'des caissons de vêtements impregnés d'immenses pestilentiels de la fièvre jaune.'" (Immense loads of wearing apparel, infected with the poisonous exhalations of yellow fever germs).

Little wonder that such extraordinary falsehoods should have aroused the scorn and hatred of the Northern people against both people and government of the Southern States.

While Mr. Wiltz was mayor of the city there occurred one of the worst overflows of the Mississippi which, in its devastation, brought suffering to many thousand victims.

Mr. Wiltz organized plans or rallied that were eminently successful. His well-known character for honesty and justice, for foresight and wisdom, brought such efficient aid and such abundant means to the cause that the calamity was lessened and confidence restored in a comparatively short time.

In 1879 he was elected governor of the State, the people feeling secure in their choice because his past record had been an unbroken one of devotion to duty. He was only 36 years of age, and might well hope

and plan for a long, useful life. In less than two years of earnest work for his people's benefit, death struck him low. He died Oct. 16, 1881, and all Louisiana mourned his loss.

A brave and gallant soldier, a true and consistent patriot, he served his State in war and peace with ability and judgment; and as a legislator in the dark days of Reconstruction he opposed every measure which tended to the injury of his fellow-citizens.

His record for much achievement in a short term of years recalls that of the brilliant Galvez, who as governor of Louisiana became endeared to the people only to leave them when scarcely more than 30 years old.

Nearly a hundred years rolled between these young heroes, gallant in war, honorable in peace, and most deeply mourned by all who knew them.

Mr. Wiltz was speaker of the House at the time General Sheridan was in command of Louisiana. Indignant because the people of the State were opposed to the negro rule forced upon them, General Sheridan telegraphed to Grant that if he (Grant) would declare the members of the White League to be banditti, he (Sheridan) would do all else that was necessary and "hang them when caught" (including Mr. Wiltz).

Because the Southern States rejected the constitutional amendments, a registrar of votes wrote North as follows, and his letter shows that the conditions were unbearable, since they even changed his own feelings when in their midst:

"When I went on registration duty I had no very friendly feelings for the Southern people. Many of us felt that the South deserved to have negro suffrage forced upon it, for rejecting terms which seemed to us so reasonable (!). What conclusions my brother officers may have arrived at I do not know. But for myself, I must say that the negroes proved so ignorant, degraded and unmanageable that I have been forced to the conclusion that manhood suffrage may prove a dangerous, if not a disastrous experiment. Its effects cannot be confined to this section. Northern Utopians may find that it will return to plague the inventor:

And like that strange missile the Australian throws,
Their sable boomerang may slap them on the nose."

SAMUEL DOUGLAS McENERY.
This gentleman was lieutenant governor, and at the death of Governor Wiltz he succeeded him, by right, in the executive chair.

He was also a native Louisianian, and his education began in his native State at Spring Hill College, then he entered the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md., and later was a student of the Virginia University. His chosen profession was law, and in 1859 he graduated from the National Law School of Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

In 1861 he entered the Confederate service and remained active in the cause until the so-called peace was announced. He then returned to the practice of his profession, and for several years refused to accept political honors, although the Democrats offered him nominations to the Legislature, or upon the judicial bench.

Finally he permitted his name to be put on the ticket with Mr. Wiltz in 1879.

When the sad ending came of Governor Wiltz's incumbency, Governor McEnery served out the unfinished term.

In 1884 the people showed how truly they appreciated him by electing him as the chosen, not the accidental, governor.

During his administration the grand cotton centennial exposition took place, located in what is now Audubon Park. Only twenty-five years ago, and what changes have taken place since then.

Reconstruction by carpetbag-negro rule ceased to exist when Governor Nicholls assumed office, and its dissolving views grew less and less with the occupancy of the governor's chair by Wiltz and McEnery.

Louisiana had come into her own again, and her rulers were no longer seated upon the points of bayonets and held in place by Federal arms.

But the North and the South learned during those awful years many a sad lesson of chicanery, ballot manipulation, and false representations.

Debt degraded, and as wise Carlyle said, "It is so undignified," and the South was crushed beneath this burden.

The legislative expenses alone for one session in this State, amounted to more than \$900,000.

In South Carolina the public printing cost for one carpetbag administration more than for the seventy years previous.

It is only by comparing the present with the past that one can realize the blessings of to-day.

Self-government, progress, peace, these are the conditions of the present, with even brighter outlook for the future.

Louisiana is the apex of a grand triangle whose lines reach, one to the Alleghanies, the other to the Rocky Mountains, and whose base is all the northeast and northwest territory. When commerce pours along her river towards the Panama Canal then will she truly be the queen of the Mississippi Valley, fulfilling La Salle's splendid effort to place all this under one powerful banner, not knowing it would be the Star-Spangled banner of the United States—length whose folds Louisiana may yet reach his dream of grandeur and of glory.