

Famous Secret Service Agents in Civil War



Miss Pauline Cushman

How Belle Boyd won a victory for Stonewall Jackson—Exploits of Tim Webster and Elizabeth Van Lew for Union cause—Many interesting personalities of those other war times brought to mind by Memorial Day.



Miss Belle Boyd

STONEWALL JACKSON'S Valley campaign was one of the great deeds of history. Not since Napoleon's time have men been so dazzled as they were by that great exploit of his. Yet Stonewall might have gone down the Valley in defeat had it not been for a little college girl named Belle Boyd. On May 23, 1862, after Jackson had routed Banks and driven him in confusion up the line of the Shenandoah, he wrote this letter:

"Miss Belle Boyd: I thank you for myself and for the army for the immense service that you have rendered your country today."

The Union General Shields was quartered at Miss Boyd's house. He held a council of war there. Miss Boyd bored a hole in the floor of her chamber, which was over Shields' room, and lay there with her ear to it throughout the night. The next morning Stonewall Jackson was in full possession of the plans for a great battle, and was able to defeat the Union army.

She kept up her valiant work for the Confederacy until the Union officers began to suspect her, and Jackson ordered her to move from her Shenandoah home to Winchester. She had been arrested by the Federals and had flirted her way to liberty—for she was a pretty girl, despite the libelous photographs of her. In Winchester, Jackson conferred upon her a commission as captain in the Confederate army. By this time the whole North had become aware of the services she was rendering the Confederacy, and every officer and private was on the alert to get her. Yet she escaped until 1864, when she was caught on a blockade runner. Her captor lost his heart to her, deserted the navy, and married her, and the prince of Wales, afterward Edward VII, attended the wedding.

Belle Boyd is the most famous of the spies, but there are many others who deserve at least as much fame as she won. One of them was Elizabeth B. Van Lew, who had the incredible courage to act as a Union spy in Richmond throughout the war. There was not a moment during those four years when Lizzie Van Lew could hear a step behind her on the street without expecting to have somebody tap her on the shoulder and say, "You are my prisoner." She did not confine her activities to spying and reporting what she had discovered to the Union generals; she hid escaped prisoners in her house, she dealt out messages to soldiers in Libby from their homes; her resources were endless. One of her favorite devices was a metal platter with a double bottom, in which she used to pretend to convey food to the prisoners. Once a Confederate soldier, whose suspicion had been aroused, insisted on examining it; but that day Lizzie, who had been expecting some move of this kind, had filled the false bottom not with secret messages but with scalding water, and the soldier dropped it with a shriek.

Lizzie Van Lew had a secret recess in her house, a hiding place for dispatches. Sometimes she would move a hand idly toward this recess, and an hour or two later some old negro, apparently dusting the room, would slip her hand back of the mantel and find a dispatch which would go to Grant that day. It was Lizzie Van Lew who stole the body of Col. Ulysses Grant and smuggled it out of Richmond, one of the most daring exploits of the war.

Rosa B. Greenhow was a Confederate spy in Washington who dazzled the Union in the early days of the war. It was one of her assistants, a Miss Duval of Washington, who brought Beauregard the first news of McDowell's advance and enabled him and Johnson to foil the Federal plans for the campaign of Bull Run. Mrs. Greenhow sent Miss Duval to Beauregard on July 10, giving him the first news of the contemplated advance, and on July 16 she sent him word of the forces and the contemplated movement of the Union army. He promptly wired the information to Davis, and the word was sent to Johnson, which resulted in his advance and the terrible downfall of the Northern cause.

The Northern secret service was technically under the direction of Gen. Lafayette C. Baker, a man without scruple. After the war Baker insisted on taking to himself most of the credit for what had been done in detective work, but as a matter of fact the best work done in the war was done by volunteers, men and women, who were willing to risk a shameful death to serve their country. Many of them were private soldiers; some were enlisted among Allan Pinkerton's detectives. Of these the most famous was Timothy Webster, one of the greatest detectives who ever lived. Webster succeeded in getting the South to believe in him to such an extent that he came near being made the colonel of an Alabama regiment, and in Baltimore he was a member of the Knights of Liberty. He even became a trusted emissary of the Confederate war department at Richmond, and at Pittsburgh a Union mob tried to lynch him as a Confederate spy. Nothing saved him but the arrival of Allan Pinkerton, with a drawn revolver, and Webster and Pinkerton backed against the wall and stood off the mob until help arrived. Webster was finally captured in Richmond, and

was betrayed by one of his associates, who confessed to a man he supposed to be a Catholic priest. The man was not a priest, but a disguised Confederate soldier. The secrets of the confessional, of course, did not apply in such a case, and the brave spy was hanged. Hattie Lewis, Webster's sweetheart, got an audience with Mrs. Jefferson Davis and begged her, with tears in her eyes, to save the man she loved. Instead, Hattie Lewis herself was convicted of being a Union spy and served a year's imprisonment.

There was one girl who won the rank of major in the Union army. She was Pauline Cushman, an actress, who became one of the best and most famous spies in the Union army. Often and often Major Pauline acted as a sort of advance guard to the Federal army. Twice the Confederates captured her, but on both occasions she escaped. The first time she came near being released after a first search, but a second revealed the fact that in a hidden recess in her garters there were orders from Thomas. She was about to be hanged when Thomas captured Nashville and saved her. Secretary Stanton commissioned her as major in the Union army, and she was the only woman who held that rank except Maj. Belle Reynolds, the wife of a captain in the Seventieth Illinois, who went to the war with her husband and performed such prodigies of valor that Stanton honored her with a commission.

Sam Davis, the boy spy of the Confederacy, left an imperishable record of heroism. He was only fourteen when he joined the Confederate service, at first as a private soldier. His talents as a spy were great, and throughout Bragg's long warfare in Tennessee he continually made use of the brave little fellow. Davis was finally betrayed and captured in Nashville. He was taken before Gen. Grenville M. Dodge, whose story of the hearing makes a companion piece to the last days of Nathan Hale. Here is the story as General Dodge tells it:

"I took him to my private office and told him it was a very serious charge brought against him; that he was a spy, and from what I found upon his person, he had accurate information in regard to my army, and I must know where he obtained it. I told him he was a young man and did not seem to realize the danger he was in. Up to that time he had said nothing, but then he replied in a most respectful and dignified manner:

"General Dodge, I know the danger of my situation, and I am willing to take the consequences."

"I know that I'll have to die, but I will not tell where I got the information. And there is no power on earth that can make me tell. You are doing your duty as a soldier, and I am doing mine. If I have to die, I do so feeling that I am doing my duty to God and my country."

"I pleaded with him and urged him with all the power that I possessed to give me some chance to save his life, for I had discovered that he was a most admirable young fellow, with the highest character and strictest integrity. He then said: 'It is useless to talk to me. I do not intend to do it. You can court-martial me, but I will not betray the trust reposed in me.' He thanked me for the interest I had taken in him, and I sent him back to prison. I immediately called a court-martial to try him."

Even then the boy received offers of liberty if he would betray his confederate. He would not.

ULYSSES S. GRANT—MAN AND SOLDIER

By a practically unanimous verdict, Ulysses S. Grant is named as one of the few great military chieftains of the world. And the closest scrutiny of his work will convince us that his fame rests upon the most substantial foundation; upon success unqualified and unquestioned; upon the carrying through to its fulfillment of the most stupendous projects, involving such perplexing and elusive problems as are only to be encountered in the art of war. Henry E. Wing writes in the New York Christian Advocate,

And he won his success without any of the purely personal advantages with which, in the popular fancy, the ideal hero is endowed. Grant was not a handsome man. I mean there was nothing specially attractive in his bearing. He has the reputation of having been a wonderful horseman; and he was, of a certain sort, riding, occasionally, the most fractious animals, and riding always like one of the furies. But, mounted or afoot, he had a careless and almost slouching manner, and he cut a pretty poor figure by the side of the stately and dignified Meade and Burnside, or the splendid and dashing Sheridan and Hancock. His habitual conduct was exceedingly quiet and reserved, giving one the impression of innate diffidence, bordering on real bashfulness. His ordinary conversation was on the most commonplace topics, and I have no recollection of his ever giving expression, by look or language, to the extraordinary genius with which he was certainly endowed.

The trait for which he was best esteemed, at the time I knew him, was his tenacity. But I am certain that it was not appreciated. How, while sturdily holding to his main purpose, he submitted the details of the campaign to almost and sometimes most radical changes. His message to General Halleck, from Spottsylvania, "I purpose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer," was interpreted to mean that he would not alter his course one iota, whatever might happen. This did him great injustice, as representing him to be

The only thing he wrote was a short note to his mother saying that he had been captured and was to be hanged and was not afraid to die. As he stood on the scaffold a messenger arrived from General Dodge promising him immunity if he would reveal the identity of his confederate. The rope was around his neck; the boy answered:

"If I had a thousand lives I would lose them all here before I would betray my friends or the confidence of my informant."

Then he turned to the executioner and said casually, "I am ready." The trap was sprung and one of the heroes of the Confederacy was dead. He was then sixteen years old.

There was an underground railroad of Confederate sympathizers running through Maryland and Virginia, headed by Custis Grymes of Virginia. He came of the family which gave a wife to George Washington, and many of his emissaries were high-born women. One was a clergyman, Rev. Dr. Stuart, an irreproachable Episcopalian. When the dashing but hopeless raid on Vermont by a Confederate force in Canada was ordered in 1864 Grymes sent a girl named Olivia Floyd, who concealed the order in her hair. It was the fashion then for women to wear a curly net over their locks, and Olivia hid the documents there and made a wild ride on a bitter cold night into the lines, where she delivered the orders that resulted in the attack of St. Albans.

Gen. Jim Lane had a woman spy named Elizabeth W. Stiles, whose husband was murdered before her eyes by Quantrell's guerrillas in 1862. Border warfare was merciless; there was something Indian about it. Mrs. Stiles devoted her life to vengeance. She was quite deliberate about it. She went East and put her children in school, and then came back to the West and put herself under Lane's orders. She faced death many a time; once she was arraigned before Sterling Price himself, but she made him believe she was a Confederate spy, and he gave her a horse and firearms and sent her on her way.

One Union spy, Mack Williams, found himself in the Confederate line face to face with his own brother, a Confederate soldier. "I'm a Yankee spy," said Williams; "you're a rebel. Betray me if you want to; it's your duty." It was a hard and delicate question, but the ties of nature won out over patriotism.

General Baker has recorded the fact that for two years a farm near Fairfax Court House was frequented by Union officers, none of whom had the least suspicion that a daughter of the house was a Confederate spy. She was, Baker says, "a young and decidedly good-looking woman, with pleasing, insinuating manners." She appeared to be a violent Union sympathizer, yet at night she used to go out and meet Colonel Mosby and give him the information she had gained from the credulous Union officers. Baker finally caught her by sending a woman spy who gained her confidence.—New York Times.

a very stubborn man; while, on the contrary, among Grant's most valuable characteristics were his open-mindedness and his wonderful faculty of putting lessons once learned into practice.

Behind that impressive face this silent man was holding a substantial scheme for putting down the secession. This scheme embraced the general movements of all the great armies of the United States and involved the intelligent co-operation of half a score of loyal general commanders. Grant had evidently such implicit confidence in this general plan that no incident of battle, march or siege could disturb his equanimity.

Only once in my presence in that whole campaign did he betray the slightest perturbation or vexation. That was with his chief subordinate on the fatal morning of the Petersburg mine explosion. After the mine had been fired it was absolutely necessary that the assault should be instantly made. We waited a long time to hear the cheers of the men as they would charge through the breach. At last, facing the stalwart commander of the army, he cried: "Why don't the boys go in?" And on Meade—to whom this seemed a new idea—starting to stammer some reply, Grant gave him one look of intense disgust, and, wheeling his horse, rushed headlong to the front.

An example of this resolute faith occurred at the Wilderness. When affairs were in the most terrible confusion on our left, an officer rode up and reported, in an excited manner, that Hancock had been cut off and captured. Grant was sitting on the ground with his back to a tree. He did not even get to his feet. He quietly took his pipe from his mouth and said that he did not believe it. And he was right. It was during this battle that he gave me a characteristic message to insert in my dispatch to the Tribune, "Tell the people that everything is going swimmingly down here." This was in the midst of an engagement which was at least indecisive, and in which all his plans were being frustrated.

MEMORIAL DAY

HERE has not in the world's history been so splendid and continuing a testimonial of a nation's gratitude as the United States has paid to its citizen soldiers; but it has not measured up to their deserts. The last and most impressive of all tributes is that which comes from the heart, bespoken by the faltering voice, the moistening eye, the quickening pulse. It is the human testimony to the fact that as a nation we have not forgot—the pledge, on this privileged day of a glorious anniversary, that we will never forget—the promise that the future shall bring forth sons and daughters capable and willing to sustain with equal sacrifices the structure of human liberty and national security that these veterans raised.

Looking upon the spectacle, the nation will be moved to renew its assurance that, after all, there are things in this world worth fighting for, even dying for; that there are worse fates than to give one's life for a cause worthy the giving. There will be a new and resolute determination that if need shall come, as come it may, this nation again will rise to its obligation and its duty, inspired by the example of these men who preserved for us the institutions that have been made sacred by their sacrifices.

MEN WHO FIRED LAST SHOTS OF THE WAR AFTERWARD MET

TRIBUTE TO GRANT AS IMMORTAL SOLDIER AND STATESMAN

A COLUMBUS (Ohio) man claims to have fired the last shot of the war of Secession—David N. Osyor, the Columbus Dispatch states. He was a member of Company F, Ninth Ohio cavalry. On the morning of April 17, 1865, that command was near Durham Station, N. C. It was keeping close watch on Gen. Joe Wheeler's cavalry, which was on the opposite side of an extensive swamp. Part of the Union cavalry was ordered to dismount and wade across the swamp to distract the Confederates, while the rest constructed a corduroy bridge. They used their carbines so vigorously that the Confederates surmised that a very considerable force was coming at them, and the road builders got along fine with their bridge.

Near the other edge of the swamp Osyor says a Confederate bullet just clipped his sergeant's chevron and the skin on his arm. Looking for the source of the bullet, he spied the long barrel of a gun and the gray legs of a Confederate soldier in the forks of a tree in front of him, and he fired at them. He saw the legs withdrawn and the owner of them crawl slowly away.

Just then a flag of truce came in sight and the Union men were ordered to cease firing. The occurrence, Osyor said, did not impress him at the time, but that flag of truce was really the sign of the end of the Civil war, for the general surrender came soon and the troops were sent home.

A strange part of the story is that long after the war Osyor met at Birmingham, Ala., a man named Amos Thompson, who was lame—said he had been wounded in the Confederate service and, comparing notes, they established to the satisfaction of both that Thompson was the man who was in the tree on the edge of the Durham swamp back in 1865, had shot at Osyor and been shot in turn by him. Osyor's bullet struck Thompson in the knee and made him a cripple for life. They agreed that they had fired the very last shot on each side in the Civil war.

Duty Before Men of Today.

In an address at the Homewood cemetery, Pittsburgh, Rev. J. E. Norcross of the Shady Avenue Baptist church said: "We are living in the best period of the world's history. In spite of war and rumors of war humanity is advancing. The rise and fall of nations form stages in the evolution of the race. National crises are not mere happenings; they are the meeting places of broken laws. God waits for nations to move, but God moves while we wait. Nations, as well as individuals, reap their harvests. Much will be required of us. To falter will be reckoned cowardice. Our strength will be equal to omnipotence if we are aligned with God. It is our specific mission to help America fulfill her unique destiny."

THE FOLLOWING poem in tribute to Gen. U. S. Grant by Dr. Thomas Calver was read by the author at the exercises celebrating Grant's birthday at the Metropolitan M. E. church, C street and John Marshall place, Washington.

GRANT.

When history uplifts her scroll!
Within the beams of Glory's blaze,
Few names are seen upon the roll
Reflecting fully all the rays;



The stain of selfish thirst for fame,
Undue ambition's fatal blight,
The itching palm's encircling shame
Too often dim the golden light.

But when the shining name appears
Of one whose strength was truth
and worth;
Who no ambition knew, nor fears,
Gave for the country of his birth;
Who had no thought of selfish ends,
But fought to win his country's
fight
And change her foes to loyal friends—
That name shows full effulgence
bright.

The youthful soldier's laurels green;
The citizen's plain, useful ways;
The victor's glad, yet modest mien,
When honored with a nation's
praise;
The manly heart that could but feel
Compassion for a fallen foe;
The statesman's patriotic zeal—
All on his name their glory throw.

The soldier of immortal fame—
The grandest chieftain of his day—
What title can precede his name
And not due honors take away?
Oh, may that name, throughout all
time,
Desire in youthful hearts implant
To emulate, in worth sublime,
The soldier and the statesman,
Grant!