

THE DESERTER

DECEMBER, 1862. Rosecrans, recently assigned to the command of the Army of the Cumberland, lay encamped on the Nashville turnpike almost within hearing of the church bells of Murfreesboro. Directly in front and shielded by the dense cedar thickets rested the army of the Confederate General Bragg. The rebel defense described a semicircular line between Rosecrans and Stone River in a country admirably adapted to a running fight toward Murfreesboro, the rebel base. Simultaneously the commanders of the opposing forces were planning attack. Rosecrans desired to gain possession of Murfreesboro. Bragg's plan was defensive and might after night be made weak demonstrations on the Union front, which were recognized by Rosecrans at their true value. Unless Bragg dislodged the Federal troops massing in front on his right Polk's corps must be withdrawn behind the river and Murfreesboro abandoned.

War slumbered in the air. The soldiers, fatigued by continuous campaigning, lay stretched about the camp in resting positions. For did the crack of the outposts' rifles nor the volleys of cavalry carbines cause so much as the blink of an eyelid for the raising of a head in the camp. Familiarity had bred contempt for the musket shot and the roar of the cannon in the distance may have caused a curl of the lip—no more. The powder-stained horses felt the breath of coming battle, but it gave them no concern, and they huddled snugly together in their blankets, for they feared the shivering blasts of December more than the puny bullets of the enemy.

Back in the cedars in a house whose portico raised its head above the shivering bare branches, General Rosecrans pored over his plans of campaign against Bragg. It was essential to drive the rebel general beyond the river and gain possession of Murfreesboro and the Union commander knit his brows and pondered over his contemplated plans of attack. The door opened and a young and intelligent looking officer stepped inside. His shoulder straps showed the rank of first lieutenant. For an instant he paused at the entrance. He seemed to know his superior was worried and he hesitated to advance. The general was unmindful of his presence. For an instant longer the young officer waited, then as a determined expression appeared on his face he stepped resolutely forward.

"General," he said. Rosecrans looked up and a smile broke through the clouds on his face. "Ah, lieutenant," he said with a sigh, pushing aside his troublesome maps, "glad to see you. Sit down. What's on your mind?"

He leaned his head on his hand and looked dreamily from the window. He was more interested in his own thoughts than in what the young officer was saying.

"Eh, what?" he exclaimed, suddenly arousing like one from a dream, "what is that you are saying?"

The lieutenant looked him in the eye and replied: "I was asking permission, general, to absent myself from camp for perhaps forty-eight hours."

General Rosecrans stared at him in amazement. "I cannot comprehend the meaning of such a request," he said, finally. "In less than forty-eight hours I expect to engage General Bragg. I haven't a doubt in the world he is planning a similar attack on my forces. A fierce conflict is inevitable. And yet you have the temerity on the threshold of battle to ask for leave of absence. I repeat I cannot understand it, and, moreover, I am doubly surprised that such a request should come from a trusted officer like you."

A flush mounted to the temple of the lieutenant. He felt the sting of the general's reply.

"Pardon me, general," he said, with just a touch of resentment. "Your suspicions do me injustice. You have never known me to flinch from duty or to tremble in the face of the enemy."

The general measured him closely and a worried look passed over his face. "I have spoken of no suspicions," he said, testily.

"But your manner, sir," said the other. "Pardon me, your manner was quite convincing."

"But such a request at such a time," said his chief. "It is peculiar, not to say amazing. Why do you, an officer of my army, desire to leave of absence when we may be hand to hand with the enemy at any hour?"

He looked sharply at his subordinate and his question was freighted with significance. The young officer was not unmindful of it and flushed again.

"You are hard on me, general," he said, boldly. "But let me explain. You contemplate an attack on Murfreesboro and it's possible, nay, more than probable, destruction. Murfreesboro holds all that is near and dear to me—"

The general raised his head in interested inquiry. The lieutenant went on: "In one of the hospitals there lies my young wife, who has just this very day given birth to our first child—"

"Why, how—" the general began. "Here, in this paper," cried the lieutenant excitedly. "It is published in Murfreesboro and contains the story of the birth of a Northern child and gives its mother's name and mine. It is my wife and my child, General Rosecrans, and it is to save them that I ask leave of absence."

The general took the paper from the excited man and read the account with interest. When he laid the paper down there was a look of grave concern on his war-bronzed face.

"Lieutenant Henry," he said sternly, "you are deserving of the severest censure for bringing your wife to this part of the country at such a time. I am surprised that a man of your sound sense would do it."

"I could not help it," was the impulsive reply. "I wanted her where she would be near me. She wanted to be here. I could not withstand her appeals and so let her come with my faithful old negro servant. Can't you see, General Rosecrans, I want to move her from Murfreesboro? It means death to her to remain. The roar of the guns, the shriek of the shells, the crash of the walls and the whole awful roar of war would kill her. I only want time to war would kill her. I only want time to remove her to a place of safety. I will

ride like a—, general, and—still if you think it is only cowardice that makes me ask you this favor, then I withdraw the request, for better her death and mine than that."

Flushed and excited, he drew himself up proudly and turned to go, but a word from his chief arrested him. Evidently his earnest eloquence had made an impression.

"Lieutenant," said the general, rising and placing his hand kindly on the young officer's shoulder, "I appreciate your position and sympathize with you. Were it at any other time I would not only gladly give my consent, but send a mounted escort with you. As it is, and he paused, while the lieutenant, anticipating refusal, closed his eyes. "As it is I cannot refuse your appeal. You may go."

For an instant their eyes met. For another instant the lieutenant seemed incapable of action, then suddenly he sprang forward, grasped his chief by the hand and exclaimed fervently: "Thank you, general, from the bottom of my heart."

"Waste no time," said his chief, seriously. "Ride for your life. Think what it means to be absent when your comrades are engaged in battle. Think of your future if you fail to return in time."

It was a warning kindly expressed and Lieutenant Henry grasped its full significance.

Twenty miles on his journey that night through the woods and jambies that beset his path young Henry was thrilled with the thought that he had to run the outposts of two armies. What would become of him if he ran into the lynx-eyed sentries of either line? Musing thus, he was awakened by the sharp cry of:

"Halt!"

His only reply was to crouch low over the saddle and dig his spurs fiercely into the flank of his mount. The horse responded gallantly and shot obliquely into the gloom. The sharp crack of a rifle sounded close by and a bullet whistled over the young rider's head, followed by the shrill cry of the guard, which grew fainter and finally died out as Henry plunged through the cedar thickets. Long before the first faint streaks of dawn illumined the sky a song of joy arose in his heart, when his eyes caught the flickering lights of Murfreesboro. With only thoughts of his suffering wife and newborn little one in his mind, he rode boldly forward and plunged headforemost into



"THE SHARP CRACK OF A RIFLE SOUNDED CLOSE BY."

a squad of Confederate infantry. There was no chance to return. A dozen long squirrel rifles were leveled at his head and the husky voice of the first sergeant in gray commanded him to advance. He rode forward with his head erect, but his heart sinking within him. On the very threshold of success he saw his mission fluttering idly to the ground.

"Well, who in — are you, anyhow?" demanded the sergeant gruffly, surveying the hated blue uniform that Henry wore.

"Lieutenant Henry of the — Ohio," was the proud response.

"You've got a pile of nerve, I reckon, hain't ye, fer runnin' through these lines in that cursed blue suit? What y' doin' yer, anyhow?"

"I'm here to see my wife, who is dangerously ill at the hospital," he answered, hoping to stir the sympathy in their hearts if they had any.

A laugh greeted the reply. "Mebby y'ar and mebbly y'ain't," said the sergeant, slyly, "but I want t' tell yo' that I've saw Confederates in blue clothes afore an' I hant been fooled on 'em nuther."

Hope sprang up in Henry's breast. He was quick to act. Smiling knowingly, he said: "You've got sharp eyes, sergeant. Think I'm a spy, don't you?"

"Some folks call it that and some don't," said the sergeant with a grin, "but I'll tell yo' I hant never seen th' Yank at'll get so danged fer away from home by hisself."

The others nodded assent when he turned toward them and they all looked with friendly eyes on Henry. The sergeant laughed coarsely at his own shrewdness. "Stands to reason," he said slowly, "that he wouldn't be derved fool enough to stumble into a gang like this if he was a Yank. Why say, we was makin' noise enough to scare Rosecrans outen his boots, wa'n't we, boys?"

They all laughed their assent. "Yo' air perty good," he said, turning to Henry, "an' yo've got nerve. Where's the enemy at?"

"Thirty miles south, Rosecrans in command," he answered promptly, "but he is not likely to remain there long."

"Yer danged right, lieutenant," said the sergeant, "and—"

"And," interrupted Henry sharply, "the old man would be tickled to death if he knew I was making my report to the first outpost I happened to run across."

He spoke impatiently, and it had its effect. "You're right," said the sergeant suddenly, "but we're 'oldy doin' our duty. Go along and give th' old man a good word fer us."

the dimly lighted hospital. The good sister gazed in mute astonishment at the uniform when he half staggered into the hallway, then led him silently into the little room. As he bent over the white cot a pair of eyes opened wide. There was wonderment in them for an instant, then they lighted up with love and welcome and with a faint cry.

"Rob!" she stretched forth her feeble hands to him, while the young soldier's tears rained down on the pillow. Shining through the film of suffering the glad eyes gazed admiringly on the stalwart figure of the soldier husband and the faded, dusty suit of blue. With a glad, happy smile the thin hands raised the covert, and for the time being all thoughts of the grim struggle between the North and South faded from his mind as he gazed in mute wonder on the face of his sleeping first born. A light, reverent touch of his lips to the little one's forehead and a similar loving salute to the flushed and smiling mother, then the serious look returned to Henry's face as the exigencies of the hour crowded back into his mind.

Briefly, tenderly, lest he bring alarm to his suffering young wife, he told her of the necessity of immediate flight, and, brave spirit that she was, she trusted everything to him and bowed acquiescence. The nurse, dismayed, protested, but at length gave way. It was the only thing to be done. As he stood watching the rapid movements of the nurse as she prepared for the trip the practical needs aroused him, and as he stopped the nurse and inquired, "Where's Jeff?" there was a touch on his shoulder, and, turning, he looked into the grinning black face of his trusted negro servant, whose eyes were aglow with welcome and running with tears. The two men so oddly contrasted warmly grasped each other by the hand, then briefly the young officer directed Jeff to secure an ambulance, if he had to steal one, and told him what to do. Jeff hurried away and an hour later, as the town clock pealed the hour of 4, the young officer lifted his frail wife into the primitive vehicle, while the good nurse came after with the slumbering infant. The ambulance bore the big red cross on its side, which was sufficient to carry it through any lines, and Jeff sat on the front seat with the reins.

Henry kissed his wife and child a hurried good-by and then turned to say good-by to the nurse, but there was a surprise for him. She was dressed for traveling, and as he comprehended that she meant to go to he took her face in his hands and reverently touched her forehead with his lips. She seemed not displeased at the courtesy.

"To the Bascom farm, Jeff," whispered Henry hastily. "Twenty miles northwest. You know the road. No one will stop you. Remain there until you hear from me. It can't be long before our forces reach Murfreesboro. Good-by and God bless you all."

Rosecrans was entranced. He seemed lost in a dream. The charge was the most daring he had ever seen. He vainly tried to follow the movements of the young officer, but the rolling lines of smoke obscured his vision and he caught alternate glimpses of the blue and the gray as they struggled for the mastery. A long, low cloud of smoke came between the watchers on the hill and the fighters below just as the climax seemed to come, and impatiently they waited for a friendly wind to lift the dense curtain of haze. Then as the fog lifted they bent eagerly forward in their saddles and joy welled into the heart of the chief as he saw the rebel lines waver and break.

Now in from the left and right pressed masses of others in blue swinging along like automatons, halting every now and then to pour a volley into the confused, straggling ranks of the men in gray. Joining together with a beautiful precision, they formed a solid wall in front of which the rebel defense gave way completely, and rout pervaded their ranks. The last line of a gallant defense shivered into clouds of smoke and when Rosecrans looked again the Union troops were throwing their caps into the air in their frenzy of joy, while the scattered remnants of the gray forces hurried down the bank of the river and disappeared from view.

As the smoke again dropped down and obscured the vision Gen. Rosecrans awoke as if from a trance and, riding hurriedly to a staff officer, who had been intently watching the battle through a powerful field glass, he exclaimed:

"That was the grandest charge, sir, I have ever beheld. Who led it?"

"Lieutenant Henry of the — Ohio," was the answer.—Chicago Chronicle.

A QUARTET OF BOYS.

YOUNG MEN WHO EARLY BECAME GENERALS.

Generals Merritt, Custer, MacKenzie and Upton Won Promotion by conspicuous Gallantry in the Service of Their Country—Their After Life.

HE transfer and promotion of Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt to the command of the Department of the East, with headquarters at Governor's Island, vividly recalls that historic quartet of brilliant young cavalry officers, Merritt, Custer, MacKenzie and Upton, which became famous the last two years of the war. It was a group that found its analogue in the same number of equally gallant young generals, West Pointers all, in many instances classmates of their antagonists—Stuart, Fitz Lee, Rosser and Young, in the army of Northern Virginia. It is the Union quartet that will be considered here, because their careers were similar, as they were promoted together, and the history of one is a part of the history of them all.

Merritt was the senior of the "quadripartite" of young Union generals in graduation. He was a member of the first and only "five years' class" that ever left West Point. While Mr. Davis was Secretary of War he caused the course at the United States Military Academy to be increased to five years. In the class of '60 graduated Joseph Wheeler, a member of Congress for

several terms, and a Confederate general officer; Gen. Wilson, chief of engineers, and Col. Whittemore of the Ordnance Department.

After serving as adjutant of the Second Dragoons under Col. Philip St. George Cooke, Merritt became aide-de-camp to that gallant Virginian, when he was made brigadier general in 1861, then major general and given command of all the cavalry of McClelland's army. Two days before Gettysburg, Capt. Merritt, who had attracted the attention of his superiors of the highest rank by reason of his quick military perceptions and thorough knowledge of the availabilities of the cavalry arm, was nominated brigadier general and forwarded his acceptance, and mounted the star on the very day, July 1, 1863, when Buford's columns, suddenly pushing out westward from Gettysburg, unexpectedly ran up against the advance brigades of Gen. A. P. Hill. Merritt was given the reserve cavalry command. From that day his fortune was assured. He fought a division under the eye and command of Gen. Sheridan, the cavalry officer of the Union army, at Winchester and Fisher's Hill. Sheridan showed what he thought of his young subordinate's ability and conduct when he named Merritt for the brevet of major general, which was given him. Gen. Merritt has six brevets, all for "gallant and meritorious service." From Fisher's Hill to the close of the war Gen. Merritt commanded a division of Sheridan's cavalry corps.

Second of the gallant four comes Custer. He was old for a cadet when he entered the United States Military Academy. Two classes were graduated in 1861; the first was that which would have been the second five years' class; the other, June 24. The latter was Custer's. After serving as cavalry aide-de-camp to General McClelland, June 29 he was made Brigadier General. His name and Merritt's went to the Senate together. Custer's vim and dash at Brandy Station and Aldie, while aide-de-camp to General Pleasanton, had been so conspicuous as to attract general attention, and won for him his Brigadier General's commission. From Gettysburg, in 1863, to the end, Custer was the typical hard rider, the ideal light-horseman and dashing fighter of the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac. At Fisher's Hill Custer won his brevet of Major General, the same day Merritt gained his and in the same battle. Sheridan gave Custer, the second of his "boy generals," a division of his superb cavalry, which he commanded until hostilities ceased.

Third in the list of this group of young heroes comes Upton. He was a '61 man, of the almost five years' class, that received its diplomas May 6. Like

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most of those high up in class standing, Upton was commissioned in the artillery. But he wanted a regiment, and that fortune which ever favors the brave stood Upton's friend. By a lucky chance he was commissioned colonel of the One Hundred and Twenty-first New York Volunteers, and made a Brigadier General for distinguished gallantry in an attack that will be famous through all history. Upton was a brigade commander in that crack corps of Hancock's veterans which on the morning of May 12, 1864, advanced directly upon that faulty "horseshoe" in Lee's line of works at Spottsylvania, walked over the gray skirmishers, not firing a shot at them for fear of giving the alarm, and just at dawn drove the Federal wedge with terrible, decisive effect full into the horseshoe. History calls it the "bloody angle." There it was that "Hancock the superb" noted the gallant young Colonel Upton's bravery and the skill he showed in handling his command, and said to General Morgan of his staff: "By this and by that, Upton has won a star, and he shall have it." Again that 19th of October, 1864, that had been so lucky for Merritt and Custer, brought good fortune to Upton, for then he received the brevet of Major General. When General James H. Wilson went to the Western army to command all General Sherman's cavalry, he took Upton with him, and gave him the fourth division of the cavalry corps, which he commanded until his volunteers were mustered out and the war ended.

Last, and in many respects the ablest, of this quartet whose names will live as long as the history of our war survives was MacKenzie. He was the youngest in years and service of them all, as he did not graduate until 1862. But though he came a year later than any of the others, in two years and a little more than six months of active service MacKenzie had won an honor and achieved a distinction never before or since attained by any officer

A QUARTETTE OF BOY BRIGADIERS.

of our always gallant army. He had won seven brevets, everything from First Lieutenant to Major General, each "for gallant and meritorious services"—not in skirmishes, either, if you please, but such battles as Second Bull Run, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Petersburg, Winchester, Cedar Creek. That 19th of October, 1864, so often mentioned, must be noted again, for it was as fortunate for MacKenzie as it had been for the other three. For the most brilliant, soldierly courage and daring General Sheridan recommended MacKenzie's promotion to the rank of Brigadier General, and his commission was given him "for specific distinguished services" at the battle of Opequon, Fisher's Hill and Middleton, and the recipient of these honors, unequalled in American history, was then but a little over 23 years old.

And how fared they after the war ended—this gallant four? Custer died with the Indian war whoop as his death-knell, in a battle that will live in history as the last stand made by the great united tribes of the Northwest against the overwhelming white man. Upton, a full Colonel of artillery—alas, that it should have to be written—died with clouded mind by his own hand, MacKenzie lived for years dead to the world, and to the grief and sorrow of those who knew and loved him best. But the star Merritt won for years so worthily—before he wore those he wears to-day—gleamed on the gallant MacKenzie's shoulder before the light of reason went out for him forevermore. And thus it is that Merritt is the only one left of the four gallant young souls whose courage and soldierly deeds won the chivalric appreciation of their own comrades and the admiration and respect of those who had witnessed and felt the might of their valor on twenty stricken fields. And as he who is left recalls the past there must come from his own knightly heart a sigh for their memory and a prayer for the souls of the gallant brave, who have gone across the River of Death.—Globe-Democrat.

The Cormorant.

The cormorant is largely employed in China for catching fish. The birds are reared and trained with great care, and are taken out upon the lakes and rivers in a small boat, one man to every ten or twelve cormorants. The birds stand perched on the sides of the boat, and at a word from the man they scatter on the water and begin to look for fish. They dive for fish, and then rise to the surface with the fish in their bills, when they are called back to the boat by the fishermen. As docile as dogs, they swim to their master and are taken into the boat, when they lay down their prey and again resume their labor.

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