

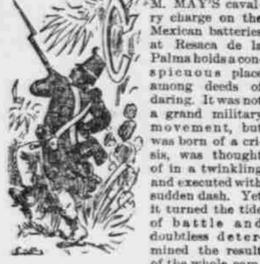
WICHITA KANSAS, SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 9, 1890.

MAY'S HEROIC CHARGE.

A THRILLING EXPLOIT AT RESACA DE LA PALMA.

Taylor's Men, Fighting Bravely but Out-numbered, Saved by a Florida Hope. A Cavalry Charge Forward and Back. Brilliant Daring at the Cannon's Mouth.

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APT. CHARLES M. MAY'S cavalry charge on the Mexican batteries at Resaca de la Palma holds a conspicuous place among the events of the war. It was not a grand military movement, but it was born of a crisis, was thought of in a twinkling and executed with a sudden dash. Yet it turned the tide of battle and doubtless determined the result of the whole campaign.

When Gen. Zachary Taylor took up his bold stand on the Rio Grande and opened the Mexican war, telling the Mexican commander that he should maintain a blockade of the river until his government ordered him to quit; that if the Mexican authorities could not control their ferocious followers he would cross over and do it, and in brief announced to friend and foe that he was "to carry the war into Africa," he knew the temper of the soldiers of his army who were to make these promises good.

The occasion of this was on the march from Point Isabel, his supply depot, back to the hostile front at Matamoros. He was dealing with largely superior numbers, and the Mexicans in order to divide his forces had threatened his base of supplies. Leaving a garrison for his new field works opposite Matamoros, Taylor went to the relief of Point Isabel, and there the sound of cannon firing at the front warned him to return. He set out May 7 with about 2,000 men and ten cannon, and the next day met over 6,000 Mexicans drawn up across the river at Palo Alto. The Americans attacked boldly and drove off the Mexicans, passing the night on the battlefield. The artillery had won the fight and gave this battle its hero, Maj. Samuel Ringold. Ringold turned the Mexican left by a bold advance of his battery, and fell with a terribly painful wound which proved to be mortal. When his brother officers gathered around to offer aid and condolence he said, "Leave me alone, you are wanted forward."

But Palo Alto did not decide the struggle, for the Mexicans simply fell back toward Matamoros, and took up one of the strong positions that can be conceived of for the purpose in view to dispute the passage of the river. The Mexicans had 2,000 fresh troops, and this every advantage was with them. Their line to the right was supported by a ravine sixty yards wide, and curved concave toward the American approach. The road crossed the ravine near the center, and was exposed to an enfilading and a cross fire from Mexican batteries. A thick and almost impenetrable chaparral covered the ground on each side of the road, and upon every opening through the thicket the enemy's cannon were trained.

The sound of heavy firing at Matamoros, only three miles distant, where 300 Americans momentarily expecting succor were behind intrenchments holding a large force in bay, showed Taylor that there was no time to spare if he wished to save his position at that point. A hundred picked men under Capt. McCall were advanced through the chaparral to draw the Mexican fire.

The American cavalry consisted of two squadrons of dragoons under Capt. May as chief. Orderly to the nature of the country, the thicket grown up with cacti bushes that had to be hewn away with swords before the horses could pass, and the fact that the enemy had strong bodies of lancers to operate wherever the ground was favorable, this little body of mounted men had been used as escort and for reconnaissance thus far in the campaign. Twice Capt. May had taken his command post haste between the American lines opposite Matamoros and Point Isabel, rendering valiant services. At Palo Alto the dragoons supported the artillery, and now at Resaca de la Palma took position well to the front for similar services.

As soon as McCall's advance had drawn the Mexican fire Taylor moved up with his artillery, which had done such execution the day before, but the formation of the enemy's line did not admit of raking them in masses, as had been done on the field of Palo Alto the day before. The Mexican infantry was strung out in front of and behind the ravine. Those in front of the ravine were assailed by the Americans as rapidly as they could get to them through the dense thicket, and Taylor's instructions to depend upon the bayonet was zealously observed. The Mexicans

fired as a cover for the movement.

In an interval when Ridgely had but one gun in action a body of Mexican lancers swooped down the road, threatening to destroy the battery. The single gun had a shell in it intended for the Mexican artillery far up the road, but a load of canister was quickly rammed in on top of it, and the venturesome Mexican horsemen were annihilated. At this time Capt. May was well up to the front supporting Ridgely's guns. Taylor was near, also, as was his custom to be where the need was greatest. It was here that he remarked to a friend who warned him that he was exposing his person too much in the heavy fire then raging, "Let us ride a little nearer and the balls will fall behind us." It was evident, notwithstanding the hands fighting of the Americans, that the battle was going against them. The Mexicans had eight cannon well posted, while Taylor had only those under Ridgely that could reply to them, and these were much exposed. Taylor's infantry pressed up to the ravine at points on the right and behind the road, but could make no headway at the place where the road crossed, for here the Mexican guns literally combed the surface of the ground with grape and canister. Ridgely's splendid firing had at last driven back the advance Mexican guns, and their artillery

was in a position to be used to great effect. Taylor determined to have those batteries carried at any cost, and ordered May to charge with his dragoons.

It was a most desperate piece of work, and such as is usually assigned to volunteers. The accounts of the affair have varied. Some of the cavalrymen sought the honor of riding from his position near Ridgely's pieces to the general and asking if he should charge the guns on the opposite side of the ravine. The reply quoted from "Hough and Ready" is, "Charge, captain, no more volunteers." But in his report Taylor states as follows: "Perceiving that no decisive advantage could be gained until the artillery was silenced I ordered Capt. May to charge the batteries with his squadrons of dragoons."

It is highly probable that on receipt of this order by means of an aide-de-camp May rode back for definite instructions, wishing to know if Taylor really meant to send a platoon of dragoons along a narrow roadway lined with the enemy's infantry and swept with artillery fire to charge several cannon in position; in fact, to attack the Mexican stronghold. The Mexican general who directed the artillery, Gen. La Vega, is reported to have said that "if I had any sum of money in camp I would have considered it unwise as far as the City of Mexico I would have bet any amount that no 10,000 men could have driven us on."

Such was the confidence of the Mexicans in their position and their superiority of numbers and up to the decisive moment when May charged, the belief was well founded. May's unexcelled daring and the forethought and courage of Lieut. Ridgely in this crisis made up for all the inequalities of the situation. When May returned to Ridgely's position and reported Taylor's ultimatum the latter had his guns shifted and masked, and he exclaimed to his comrades, who came on at the head of his devoted band, "Hold on, hold on, hold on!"

Can't hear you?" exclaimed she a little fretfully. "What is your name?" "Jess-o," exclaimed he in the same ravenlike key. "The creature is an idiot," began the tired housewife, but her husband laughingly interposed.

"He is telling you the name he goes by, Ellen. Ask him questions and you will soon see why. Won't he, Jess?" "Jess-o," replied the lad nonchalantly. "He was arrested for doing nothing, and having a rusty pistol that would be dear at fifty cents."

Jess here showed that his tongue could enunciate other ideas by remarking that this convicting weapon had cost him a dollar not long before.

"Well, you were cheated then. But here he is, Ellen; make the most of him for six months. Perhaps by that time we can get a girl."

So Jess was installed as general assistant and chore boy, a position he filled fairly well, though his shy ways and absent manner rather added to the distrust of his mistress. He was frail and awkward, though in his movements he could be swift and supple upon occasions. He also seemed to be both timid and obstinate, and unless spoken to he seldom spoke, except when with the children. In their company he was sociable enough. His childish way of assenting to most that was said rather amused Mrs. Willard's curiosity.

SKYLARK AND LINNET.

If only skylarks poured their song into the blue translucent sky. Eagerly he would stretch his arms; He'd fly the angels soaring too high For some dull car to catch the strain That dropped for me like crystal rain.

With soul entranced to ecstasy Now and again their song I've heard, While scarce my morning eye could see The form, inconspicuously fair. To feel the wills its lower light Had wrapped me close in daylight.

Then from the tones, too far from earth, To the brown thrush I've turned my ear, And in my bosom felt the birth Of sweetest melody I had made: Less strained my sense its song to catch, Though with the lark's it might not match.

Hail the wood thrush and nightingale! Hail every warbler of the glade! Were but one tenuous throat to fail, Of all song chorists God hath made The world would lose, though skylarks more In the deep heaven their songs should pour! —America.

JESS.

In the year 1874 Silas Willard and his family moved from eastern Tennessee to northern Texas, where he took up a land claim some twenty miles from where is now the thriving city of Sherman, then a mere hamlet.

Their three children were small, the youngest being a mere baby. There was much hard work to be done, a large share of which fell upon Mrs. Willard, who was one of those old-fashioned, thrifty women that are so often found among overworked farmers' wives. Besides her household she managed the kitchen garden, did the "chores" and at times even assisted her husband in his own work.

When he was away the loneliness and responsibility of her position was almost unendurable. Their nearest neighbor was seven miles away, and the prairies were bleak, windy and cheerless. Occasional parties of Indians addicted to begging and stealing would come by, thus adding fear to her other anxieties.

After a year had passed, but on reaching the "right" place, seven miles away, he found that Mrs. Scott was sick and could not go. "Never mind," he thought, "Ellen's only a little nervous." Then his mind reverted to other cares. "Prairie seems powerful dry; I must surely do that firm round which I set back."

The day was lazy yet blustering. A fine red dust whirled itself into little, scurrying clouds over the bleaker spaces of soil. Along the gentle ridges the matted grass rattled harshly; the air had a faint, stale smoky taste; the horizon was hazy and indistinct.

Mrs. Willard was spinning before the fire. A bundle of carded wool rolls, sent as a present from her father in East Tennessee, lay in the top of the open chest. The baby was asleep upon the bed. Down at the cowpen Jess, leaving his work, was dexterously lassoing a frightened yearling with a clothes line which he had surreptitiously obtained. The two older children were looking on, dumb with admiration and fear. Toward 11 o'clock Mrs. Willard stepped outside and called the boy to make a fire in the kitchen stove. Jess came very reluctantly.

"Come!" she scolded. "Are you going to be all day?" "I can't please her, and it ain't much use in trying," murmured Jess to the children with whom he had always been a favorite. The pungent fire, a single appearance of the atmosphere seemed more pronounced.

"I wish Silas hadn't put off firm" round the place," said Mrs. Willard anxiously. Jess ran up a ladder that was leaning against the nearest folded stack and looked all around.

often hid their savings in this way.

She began counting the money, when she heard a shuffling of bare feet at the half open front door. Sweeping her apron hurriedly over her lap, she waited. But instead of entering the steps receded round the house and toward the kitchen. She replaced the bag and its contents under some clothing in the chest, and began sorting over some sheets with an air of unconcern. Directly Jess came in by the back door to ask for a rag to tie up his foot, which he had hurt in some way.

"Who did you see near the children?" she fretfully demanded. "They're a waitin' on 'em on the prairie garden fence," he returned rather sullenly. "You shouldn't leave 'em on the prairie alone. Mr. Willard says there are more copperheads about this country than ever."

During all that summer and early fall her vague distrust of the lad was never entirely laid at rest. For this, dubious anticipation of the lad's reply, she had been through the stove to do her duty by him, he received her occasional acts of kindness as unemotionally as he did her censures.

In the autumn there came a season of drought. The long prairie grass shriveled and the shallow wells had bottomed out, so low that Mr. Willard threatened more than once to fetch one he had dug nearer the house some time before. Prairie fires began to be so frequently heard of that he announced his intention of "firing" round his place. But the next day he found that he had started a steer, and on the day after that he really had to attend county court at Sherman.

"Silas," said his wife as he rode away, "stop and ask Mrs. Scott to ride over and spend the day. Seems like I hate to be left alone worse than ever."

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"The money is gone, too, I reckon." "If it hadn't been for Jess we wouldn't have a one of us been left here. Oh, Silas!" Mrs. Willard called from the dry well. A few minutes later he was embracing his wife and children as they stood upon the porch and his blackened carb.

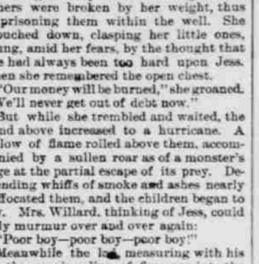
"This is a sad sight, Ellen," said he, pointing to the still burning ruins around. "The money is gone, too, I reckon." "If it hadn't been for Jess we wouldn't have a one of us been left here. Oh, Silas!" Mrs. Willard called from the dry well. A few minutes later he was embracing his wife and children as they stood upon the porch and his blackened carb.

SHIP AGAINST SHIP.

HOW COMMODORE BAINBRIDGE AND THE BRITISH FOUGHT IN 1812.

Battle Between the Constitution and the Java—Terrible Havoc on Board the English Frigate—The Palmy Days in American Naval History.

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HEN the war of 1812 broke out the strongest powers in Washington seriously proposed to lay up and dismantle the American fleet in order to save it from capture. But there were two men (seamen), whose business was fighting and not talking, who opposed this humiliating scheme. These were Capt. Charles Stewart and William Bainbridge.

When the British were given the little navy to put in command of a small squadron intended for cruising in the Pacific ocean. With the already renowned Constitution under his own command and the sloop Hornet, under Capt. James Lawrence, of never give up the ship" fame, he sailed in October, 1812, for the coast of Brazil, where he was to meet the frigate Essex, under Capt. David Porter. Soon after arriving off the South American coast the Americans found the British sloop Bonne Citoyenne in the harbor of San Salvador.

As the British was about an even match for the Hornet, with the favor slightly on her side, Capt. Lawrence challenged the English captain to fight with his ship, giving a pledge, which was agreed to by Commodore Bainbridge, that the Constitution should not interfere in the action between the two sloops. The ideas of chivalry had not died out in those days, at least among all seamen. The English man, however, refused to engage in the novel combat for the reason, as he declared, that the Bonne Citoyenne would defeat the Hornet in short order, and that under those circumstances the American commodore would not remain an idle spectator and see a ship under his orders go down unaided. He hoped that an opportunity would soon offer when the Hornet and the Bonne Citoyenne could meet alone and have it out. But when Bainbridge sailed away with the Constitution soon after, leaving the Hornet alone before the port, the English sloop refused to come out and redeem the promise, but waited inactive in neutral waters until a British seventy-four hove in sight and chased the little Hornet away.

The Essex, which was expected to meet Bainbridge and go to the Pacific, cruised for some time off the Brazilian coast, finally capturing an English ship carrying \$50,000 in specie. With this Capt. Porter started off on the famous cruise of the Essex alone.

Bainbridge was now in the situation he had predicted in saying to his superiors that the British vessels did not always sail in squadrons, and that meeting vessel for vessel the American vessels would give a good account of themselves. Bainbridge was now in the situation he had predicted in saying to his superiors that the British vessels did not always sail in squadrons, and that meeting vessel for vessel the American vessels would give a good account of themselves.

"Water, Silas!" cried his wife, as her eyes filled with motherly tears. "If he dies I'll never forgive myself." Water was brought from the well in the bottom.

"Silas," said Mrs. Willard as they all labored to restore the boy, "he must have gone back for that." She pointed to the bag of buckshot. "I've feared for some time he knew where it was, and the thought, God forgive me, used to make me uneasy. But I'll make it up to him; I'll be a mother to him if he only lives."

When Jess revived his first inquiry was after the money; then his eyes rested upon Mrs. Willard and the children. Then he smiled. "Lucky I didn't dry out that hide," he murmured.

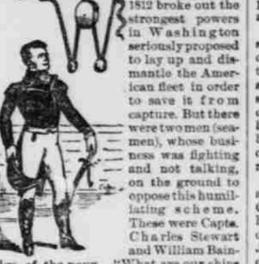
In the course of time Silas Willard recovered from his losses and his substance rapidly increased. Jess, loved and trusted now, remained with him and came to manhood. When the farm grew into a grand estate and Mrs. Willard moved to Sherman he was made general manager. "A better manager and a truer man never walked," was Mrs. Willard's perpetual verdict.

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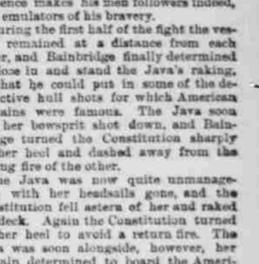
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