

**MERRITT IN SADDLE.**

**SPLENDID FIGHTING RECORD OF THE RETIRING MAJOR GENERAL.**

He Was Brave at the Right Time and Cool Headed Too—Foes He Fought Against in the Sixties—Stories of Fitz-Hugh Lee and T. L. Rosser.

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**G**ENERAL MERRITT'S retirement from the active list of the army on June 16 recalls the services of this faithful soldier during the civil war.

Sheridan and Custer are the popular ideals of cavalry heroes, but warfare on horseback isn't all a frolic or a matter of spur and dash. Merritt led the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac when it scored the highest results in horseback fighting of any campaign of the war—that is, the rounding up of Lee at Appomattox.

Wesley Merritt was a cadet at 22 and a general at 27. He won seven brevets and promotions for "gallant and meritorious" service during four years. Some sort of soldier stuff, if not the theatrical sort, must be behind such a career. As captain and aid-de-camp Merritt went into cavalry fighting of the peninsula in 1862. He continued a captain for a year and showed talent which caused him to be selected as leader of small detachments operating beyond the lines of his general. At Beverly Ford, Va., June, 1863, he showed the kind of personal valor which might have made him a popular hero had he itched for transient fame.

In the Beverly Ford combat Captain Merritt held his troops, the Second United States cavalry, under fire to which they could not reply for a long time. Careful of his men, he changed position often in order to save them from the enemy's shells. But when the order came to let loose the regiment dashed down the slope, with Merritt at its head. Across a ravine and into a regiment of the enemy the line flew. Commands became mixed in the rush, and with clouds of dust and smoke and the steaming of heated horses all the fighting had to be close handed. Sabers and pistols were the weapons. Merritt cut and slashed with the best of his troopers. Just as he had emptied his revolver into the general foe he saw a Confederate colonel riding full tilt upon one of his own men. Thrusting his saber at the breast of the colonel, he shouted, "You are my prisoner!" The response was a swinging cut at his head, which he parried and squared off for a duel on the spot. But he was surrounded by enemies and almost wholly separated from his own command, and a lieutenant, seeing the danger to his chief, forcibly dragged him through a crowd of Stuart's troops, who expected an easy prize of the lively Yankee captain.

Such was Merritt as a youthful fighter. What the war made of him can best be told in the language of one who served with him. "At the close of the war," says General Rodenbough, "Merritt was regarded as the general officer par excellence. He was young and overflowing with the vitality of youth trained in the school of the gallant Buford, he was as dashing a cavalryman as ever drew saber, yet as cautious and cool headed as Sheridan himself."

Shortly after the battle at Beverly Ford Merritt was promoted to the rank of brigadier general of volunteers and placed over the regular cavalry brigade in Pleasanton's corps. There are two ex-Confederate cavalrymen now living who could tell something about Merritt's fighting capacity. These are Fitz-Hugh Lee and Thomas L. Rosser, both of whom donned the blue in 1868. Thus Lee and Rosser, too, had fought as captains or colonels or something like that when Merritt was winning his spurs skirmishing with Jeb Stuart's men in front of Richmond or riding raids with Stoneman behind Lee's line of battle in the Chancellorville campaign. All three started out in the great campaign of 1864 at the head of divisions of mounted men. Rosser's troops were the first Confederates encountered by the Army of the Potomac in the Wilderness region, May 5. Next day Merritt and Fitz-Hugh Lee's divisions fought at Todd's Tavern, on the flank of the infantry battlefield.

Sheridan's plan of fighting off opposing cavalry led to a campaign of hard riding rather than fighting. He started with his 10,000 sabers on the highroad to Richmond, expecting Stuart to follow him, which he promptly did. Rosser, however, was left behind to mask the movements of the Army of Northern Virginia, and, while he gave the enemy plenty to do in the way of scouting and skirmishing, there was no real battle. Merritt led the column with Sheridan, and to Fitz-Hugh Lee fell the task of getting between the bold Federal raiders and Richmond. The clash between them came at Yellow Tavern, 12 miles from Richmond. This was an irregular fight, in which first one side and then the other had the advantage. Merritt's division bore the brunt of it on one side and Fitz-Hugh Lee's on the other. Stuart was killed. Fitz-Hugh Lee fell back to the gates of Richmond. Sheridan followed up and attacked, but was attacked in turn by some of the Richmond garrison. Merritt brought his division up on a run and saved Sheridan's corps from defeat if not destruction.

The affair at Yellow Tavern taught the troopers of both sides that they must be up and doing. Grant was heading for Richmond, and Sheridan

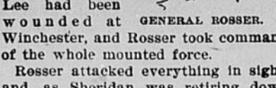
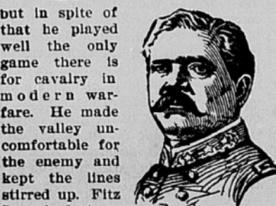
must clear the road for him. But delays for the enemy were what Lee wanted, and Stuart's cavalry was expected to hold off the Federal advance guard as long as possible. After making a sweep past the gates of Richmond to the James river Sheridan turned back to meet the main army. He found the roads blocked at Howe's Shop, northeast of Richmond, and there was fought another exciting cavalry battle. Merritt, Rosser and Fitz Lee were all there. Sheridan won the day, but his triumph was short of its splendor by a stunning setback in an encounter which followed.

After Grant had closed his toils around Petersburg he sent Sheridan toward Lynchburg to cut Lee's army off from the supplies brought from there. The enemy met Sheridan at Trevilian Station, on the Central railroad, and in a sharp battle compelled him to retreat. Fitz Lee and Rosser were both conspicuous in the fight, and Rosser led the charge which decided the day. He was wounded at the head of his troops.

After another raid on the James river line the scene of cavalry combat shifted to the Shenandoah valley, where Merritt and Rosser and for a time Fitz-Hugh Lee kept up the play of thrust and parry. Wilson's famous raid of 100 miles in the rear of Lee's army at Petersburg called into the field both Fitz-Hugh Lee and Rosser. Merritt's division was left out of that rushing campaign, but this was the last exemption until the war was over. Fitz Lee followed the transfer of Sheridan to the Shenandoah and fought in the first battle of the campaign which ended at Cedar Creek. He commanded the Confederate cavalry at Winchester, where Merritt held the post of honor and won a new brevet. Winchester was chiefly an infantry battle, with the cavalry on the flanks to prevent surprises. The Confederate cavalry was then weak in numbers, but was soon increased and given new life by the coming of Rosser from the Army of Northern Virginia. Rosser was hailed as the "Savior of the Valley," and perhaps there was some vain boasting,



GENERAL MERRITT.



GENERAL ROSSER.

but in spite of that he played well the only game there is for cavalry in modern warfare. He made the valley uncomfortable for the enemy and kept the lines stirred up. Fitz Lee had been wounded at Winchester, and Rosser took command of the whole mounted force. Rosser attacked everything in sight, and, as Sheridan was retiring down the valley, it was comparatively safe to harass his rear. Finally Sheridan sent word to his chief of cavalry to start out "and either whip Rosser or get whipped himself." Somebody did get whipped. The battle was at Tom's Brook, and the fighting lasted two hours. Then Merritt chased his routed foe, half of Rosser's column, 20 miles up the valley pike, capturing five guns, together with ambulances, caissons and wagons, a sweep which was expressed in the army phrase, "Everything on wheels."

Tom's Brook has generally been called the Waterloo of the Confederate cavalry in the Shenandoah, but it did not finish Rosser. He was back in the Army of Northern Virginia with his division in fighting trim when Merritt, at the head of the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac, again appeared on the James. The first encounter was at Dinwiddie Court House, a preliminary to Five Forks. Merritt had nothing but cavalry, but the Confederates brought up a division of infantry. Fitz Lee commanded the mounted troops and Rosser a division under him. The fighting lasted all day, but the Confederates were forced back to Five Forks, where the fate of Lee's army was decided April 1. The battle began with infantry and artillery, but finally Merritt's troopers charged the intrenchments and batteries. Lee and Rosser were on the flanks and guarded the retreat.

In the race for Appomattox the cavalry of both sides scored successes. Merritt started in to head off Lee, and the Confederate cavalry acted as advance guard and flankers. At High Bridge Rosser outstripped the Yankee troopers and totally destroyed General Read's force of infantry and cavalry. Two Federal generals were killed, and Rosser lost a general and a colonel, killed.

If it hadn't been for Grant's "three to one" at Appomattox, that would have been the grandest cavalry battle of modern times. Fitz Lee, with his cousin's (Rosser's) and Mumford's divisions, supported by Gordon's infantry, charged Merritt's lines at 9 a. m. that historic day. The Federals gave way all along the line, leaving guns and prisoners in the hands of the enemy. Custer whirled in to cover the retreat of the cavalry, but opportunely a corps of Federal infantry came swinging along, and just as the mixed column was ready for battle the truce was sounded, sabers were sheathed, and at least three men of that grand array—Merritt, Fitz Lee and Rosser—lived to draw in a common cause in 1898.

GEORGE L. KILMER.

**MALCOM KIRK.**

A Tale of Moral Heroism in Overcoming the World.

BY CHARLES M. SHELDON,  
Author of "In His Steps," "Crucifixion of Philip Strong," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days."

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Illustrations by Herman Hayer.

**CHAPTER VII.**

**THE ANGEL OF DEATH.**  
Nearly three years after Malcom Kirk and his wife had made their promise in the little Home Missionary church of Conrad, one evening in September, a stranger stepped out of the east bound Chicago express upon the platform at Conrad and inquired for the residence of the Rev. Malcom Kirk.

"He lives up by the church," said the man to whom the question was put. "Come out to the end of the platform and I'll show you."

The stranger followed, and the man pointed up the street where the tower of the little church could be seen. "You'll find him in the parsonage close by at the right of the church."

The stranger thanked him and started down the platform steps, when the man called after him: "They're having trouble at the minister's house. I thought if you didn't know I ought to tell you. They have a very sick baby there."

The stranger paused and looked uncertainly at the man. "I won't go there, then, if I ought not. I am one of Mr. Kirk's old seminary classmates. I stopped off on my way home from Colorado, where I have been taking my vacation. Perhaps I had better not call there tonight. I didn't know of his trouble. Do you know how sick the baby is?"

"No. It's serious. The doctor has been there nearly all day." The stranger hesitated and finally moved on toward the parsonage. "I will simply stop and inquire at the house and then go to the hotel," he said to himself.

When he knocked at the little parsonage, Dorothy herself opened the door. "This is Mrs. Kirk? I am Mr. Wilson, one of Mr. Kirk's classmates at Hermon. You remember me? I was on my way from Colorado and stopped off to see him. I only just heard of the illness of your baby. I—"

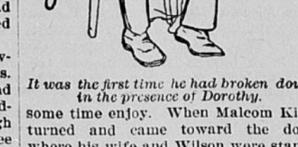
"Come in, Mr. Wilson. I know Malcom will want to see you," she said, and he entered with some reluctance to intrude at such a time, but her manner assured him that his presence was grateful to them.

Three years had made some changes in Dorothy. She was very beautiful still, and there was something more in the face which God's children always have after trial and suffering have purged the life within. Wilson noted in a glance the unmistakable sign of economy.

He was struck also with the profound atmosphere of the first great trouble that had come into this woman's home. It was so positive that he felt unable to say anything commonplace by way of sympathy.

In the next room Malcom Kirk was walking up and down with his baby in his arms. The day had been very hot, and the upper chambers of the little house were stifling.

The Rev. George Wilson will never forget that sight this side the deathless paradise that all of the redeemed shall



It was the first time he had broken down in the presence of Dorothy, some time enjoy. When Malcom Kirk turned and came toward the door where his wife and Wilson were standing, his classmate saw on his face a look of suffering which the strong, homely, marked features emphasized.

For three weeks he had hardly closed his eyes. He had prayed, his wife beside him, every night on his knees by the little crib that their firstborn son might be spared to them. But tonight, as the baby lay in his arms, he knew that the loving Father had some great reason unknown to them for taking to himself this bit of humanity that for a few months had made the little parsonage on the prairie the very garden spot of all the world to them.

Dorothy, without a word, took the baby from her husband, and he, with out a word, clasped his old classmate's hand, and the men stood there a moment praying. "It's you, George?" said Kirk. "It seems good to see your face. We"— Malcom Kirk sat down and buried his face in his great hands and sobbed

it was the first time he had broken down in the presence of Dorothy. The sight of his old classmate had revived his Hermon memories. He saw again the old campus, its great avenues of elms, the noble landscape of hills and woods, Dorothy's home across the campus, his own dingy little room, his love for the woman who now was sharing this great trouble with him. And he cried without attempt at concealment, for his heart was sore at the coming loss of the baby out of a home where God himself had blessed the love of a man and wife as rarely in human lives it has been blessed.

Finally he lifted up his face and spoke calmly: "We've hoped all along, of course, but the long continued heat has been against his recovery. It's hard to part with the little fellow. See"— Malcom Kirk rose and took the baby again from his wife, while Dorothy sat down near a table and laid her beautiful head on her arms, but still she was without a tear. "See, the little fellow smiles at me still."

The baby opened his eyes, looked up into Malcom Kirk's gaunt, agonized countenance, and a faint light went over its face.

"Malcom, oh, Malcom!" cried Dorothy. "I can't endure it!" It was the first protest that had escaped her. Like him, the presence of this friend from the old loved place in the east had stirred her heart, and even as she cried aloud in her anguish the pent up tears came, and she cried in sobs that rent her husband's heart even more than the baby's sad smile.

Wilson choked as he rose to go and said: "Kirk, may God bless and help you at this time. I would stay and watch with you or help in any way"— "No; it will not be necessary. The neighbors and church people have been very kind to us. No one can do any more."

He went away to the hotel, promising to come in the morning to inquire, and the night grew on for Malcom and Dorothy. The doctor came in, a few of the most intimate church members also, but no one could do any more, and Malcom Kirk held the baby with a tenderness that relieved its suffering, for they had not been able to place its body in a restful position on a bed, and it had grown used to its cradle of long, strong arms.

It was toward morning, when no one was in the room except Malcom and Dorothy, that the baby died. It seemed to these two as they watched it go that their hearts broke, and the world turned black and empty before them when the last breath was drawn by that frail, trembling body. For a little while Malcom held him. Then he laid the body down on a couch, and kneeling there with his arms about his wife, he joined with her in a moment of unspeakable anguish for the death of their firstborn.

The sun came up dry and red, the heat of another day began to pour into the little room, and it seemed to the bereaved parents as if the earth was a great, dry, burned out wilderness. The neighbors called. Wilson came, and his presence and silent sympathy were a blessing to Malcom and Dorothy. But when, later in the day, the baby had been laid in the little coffin and placed in the center of the room with a bunch of white geraniums on its breast brought in by the members of Dorothy's primary Sunday school class Dorothy laid her head down on the table beside the casket, and her grief was very, very great. Malcom stood beside her, looking hungrily at his little wife's face, and the people in the little room quietly went out and left them alone for awhile.

Next day Wilson read the funeral service and prayed at the house, and after the simple service a little company went with Malcom and Dorothy to the cemetery just on the edge of the town, and the baby was buried there, and these children of the All Father went back to the little parsonage.

It was a great blessing to them at this time that Wilson was with them. He, seeing how they clung to his presence, staid over Sunday and preached for Malcom. It was during this stay that he learned something of what Malcom and Dorothy had been doing. A short extract from a letter written by him to his wife in the east will show us something of the first three years of Malcom Kirk and his wife's attempt to make good their pledge to help redeem the lives of the people of Conrad:

"I cannot tell you what a profound sense of sympathy I have felt for my old classmate and his wife during their great trouble, but I am simply astonished to find how great a work they have done in the three years they have been here. This is a place of about 2,000 people. It is having a boom at the present time.

"The agitation over the saloon is increasing, and I am told by Kirk and others that things are nearing a crisis and in all likelihood the next legislature will pass a prohibitory amendment. The liquor men laugh at this probability and scout the idea that such a law can ever be passed. There are ten saloons here in Conrad and all apparently flourishing. Among other things that the whisky element has attempted during Kirk's stay here has

(Continued on Eighth Page)

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