"GRIMES" DAVIS' RIDE

A BOLD NIGHT MARCH THROUGH THE ENEMY'S LINES.

How the Union Cavalry Escaped From Stonewall Jackson's Clutches at Harper's Ferry—A Deed Worthy of Forrest—The Story of a Participant.

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IT IS not only disheartening but most distressing to soldiers to find themselves surrounded by an active enemy, all hope of fighting gone and no alternative but to surrender as prisoners of war. Most men prefer fighting to surrendering if there is a shadow of a chance to get out, but the decision is seldom left to the voice of the very ones who will suffer most if it comes to a forlorn battle. Stonewall Jackson surrounded the Union post at Harper's Ferry on Sept. 13, 1862. He had 20,000 men. The garrison of Harper's Ferry numbered over 13,000. The position is low ground on a neck of land formed by junction of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers and is surrounded at close range by a series of heights from 600 to 1,000 feet above the water. Jackson planted his cannon on the heights ready to bombard the works, but delayed opening fire for some time.

The officers of the garrison, as is usual in such cases, were divided as to what ought to be done to save the post, or at least the men and their arms. The commandant, Colonel Dixon S. Miles, urged that fighting would be a waste of life and that he had no authority to abandon the place, having been ordered to hold it. One of those who dissented from this view was Lieutenant Colonel B. F. Davis, leader of the Eighth New York cavalry, a regiment forming part of the cavalry force of 1,200 horse included in the garrison. Late on the 14th Colonel Davis, known in the service as "Grimes" Davis, with Colonel Hasbrouck Davis of the Twelfth Illinois cavalry, devised a scheme to save their commands. "Grimes" Davis was a native of Alabama and may have had a personal incentive in not wishing to be taken prisoner. He was an officer in the regular army and had served in the southwest before the war with many of the Confederate leaders arrayed against him at Harper's Ferry. In the early days of the war the southerner who stuck by the Union flag was considered by the south a traitor to his people.

The idea of escaping from Harper's Ferry as things stood was a bold one. The Virginia shore was alive with Confederates, and the Maryland region just north of Harper's Ferry was occupied by the main army of Lee. The details of the escape are told in plain soldier language in a sketch of the Eighth New York cavalry written by Henry Norton. After a brief account of the opening of the siege by Jackson's army the narrator says:

"The colonel made preparations to go out with his regiment and what cavalry remained there—two regiments and two detachments, numbering 1,300 in all. He got one of the old settlers who knew the country well to pilot him through Maryland, which was then occupied by the Confederate General Longstreet's corps. He had a scout watching the enemy's movements, for he knew the only way to get out was through Longstreet's lines.

"On the 14th of September everything was ready for us to get out of the Ferry if we could. In the evening about 8 o'clock we were drawn up in line, and our sutler, knowing that he could not get out with his goods, gave the boys what he had on hand. We crossed the Potomac to the Maryland side on a pontoon bridge. Before we crossed each captain gave orders that each man of his company must follow his file leader, and that no other orders would be given. We crossed the river by twos, while the colonel with his pilot went ahead to clear the road. When the head of the column got across the river, the men would start off at full speed, so by the time the last man was across the head of the line was 10 miles away. I was near the rear of the line, and the way we went was a caution. Each horse went as fast as he could go. By the time all had crossed it was dark. Dark was no name for it. It was just the right kind of a night for such an undertaking. The only way one could tell how far we were from our file leader was by the horses' shoes striking fire on the stones. Sometimes we would be 20 yards away from our file leader and then would come up full drive. Then we would hear some tall swearing. That was the way we went for several miles. The advance drove the enemy's pickets in soon after crossing the river. The Confederates were surprised to see Yankees coming from that direction. They thought we were cooped up in the Ferry and did not dare come out.

SKIRMISH AT SHARPSBURG.

"About two miles from where the enemy's pickets were driven in the Confederates bar leaded the road to stop us. The colonel knew what they would do, so before we got there he went across lots and gave them the slip. The pilot knew every foot of the ground in Maryland, and the scout knew how Longstreet's corps was situated, having come from there about an hour before we started from the Ferry. The colonel had his route mapped out before we started. He was bound to go through or die in the attempt. He managed to avoid the Confederates until he reached Sharpsburg, 10 miles from Harper's Ferry, where the advance had a brush with them. It did not last long, as the colonel ordered a charge and drove the enemy back. They retreated to camp, giving the alarm that the whole Yankee army was upon them. We learned afterward from some prisoners taken that the whole of Longstreet's corps stood in line the rest of the night, expecting to be attacked.

"As I was riding along trying to keep up to my file leader my horse kept shying every little while. Come to find out, there were cavalry horses lying in the road. They had been ridden so fast that they had dropped down dead by the wayside.

"About two miles out we began to go through the fields. We would go in the fields for awhile and then back in the road again. At one time we were so close to the enemy's camps that we could see the Confederates plainly by their campfires. On we went at full speed. I did not think at first that they were Confederates. I said to my file leader, William R. Gulle: 'Bill, what is the use of the colonel going farther? Here are our troops.' Bill said: 'They are not our troops. They are Confederates.' I said to Bill, 'We are goners, for we will all be captured.'

"When the advance reached Sharpsburg, 10 miles from Harper's Ferry, they made a halt, so that we could close up and let our horses get their wind, for we had been on a keen scoot ever since we left the river. We did not stay there long, perhaps half an hour. Then we went on again across flats, over fences, through creeks, as usual. We had to travel on byroads, for the enemy had pickets on all main roads. We had gone through Longstreet's corps. A great many would say that it was an impossibility for a force of 1,200 cavalry to do that. Had it not been in the night, and had the colonel not managed just as he did, we could not have done it. The Confederates were taken by surprise, for they thought we had a large force. So they waited for us to attack them. But we had other business about that time. All we wanted was to get out of there. If they would let us alone, we would them.

"After we left Sharpsburg we did not come across any more Confederates until we struck the pike running from Hagerstown, Md., west to Williamsport on the Potomac. Just before we reached the pike we halted in a piece in the woods. We could hear wagons rumbling along the road ahead of us. The colonel went forward to reconnoiter, and when he got to the road he soon found that it was a Confederate wagon train. As soon as he saw them it came into his head to capture that train. The train was guarded by 50 or 60 cavalry and some infantry. The cavalry was in the rear of the train, the infantry in front.

"When the advance of the wagon train came along to the crossroad, the colonel insisted that they should turn to the right on the pike that ran north into Pennsylvania. After he got the train started on that road he sent for the Eighth New York. This was just before daylight. We went ahead and took possession of the train. The Twelfth Illinois cavalry kept the Confederate cavalry in check while we were passing by the teams to take our places. One of the Confederate teamsters said to me, 'To what regiment do you belong?'

"'The Eighth New York,' I replied.

"'The hell you say!'

"Only the drivers of a few of the head teams knew then that they were prisoners. The rest did not know it until after daylight. It was a big undertaking. The colonel might lose his whole command by doing it. At daylight we had the train all on the road that runs to Greencastle, Pa. Then came the tug of war to see if we could hold it. It was an ammunition train of nearly 100 wagons, with six mule teams to each wagon. We took between 200 and 300 prisoners who had crawled into the wagons to ride. One of them was an officer, an old acquaintance of Colonel Davis. He got out of the wagon, and after talking over old times a few minutes with the colonel said to him, 'I suppose for old acquaintance sake you will let me go to my command?'

"'No, sir; you will go with me,' the colonel replied.

"That was enough. He went.

"Luck seemed to follow us all the way through. It was one of the greatest feats of the war. After the teamsters found that they were prisoners, weren't they mad? Mad was no name for it. They tried to stop the train. One fellow got off from his mule and began to unhitch the team from the wagon. Another tried to set fire to the straw in which the shells were packed. We put a stop to that. A cavalryman rode by the side of every driver and told him that he must keep his team going, for we would shoot the first man who did not obey orders. That quieted them.

"So on we went. We had not gone a great many miles when we heard firing in the rear. Those in advance thought it was all day with them, but our rear guard kept the enemy in check. The Confederate cavalry followed us up a number of miles. The reason they did not retake the train was that they did not know how much force we had and were afraid of getting too far north lest they might be drawn into a trap. So they let us go with our prize. We kept the train going as fast as we could and arrived in Greencastle about 9 o'clock a. m. on the 15th. When we arrived, the inhabitants at first would not believe what we had done, that we had marched from Harper's Ferry (over 30 miles), gone through Longstreet's corps and taken nearly 150 wagons from the enemy in 12 hours."

It was indeed a bold exploit. Forrest never carried out one that excelled it in energy or daring.

As a reward for his pluck Davis was promoted to lead a brigade. He was the inspiring genius of the movement, and his success set the country north and south agog with astonishment that the whole garrison of Harper's Ferry did not follow the cavalry out.

The first cavalry battle of the Gettysburg campaign, the meeting between Stuart and Pleasonton on the banks of the Rappahannock river, at Beverly Ford and Brandy Station, June 9, 1863, cut short the career of the bold leader of that escape. He was instantly killed at the head of his brigade while fighting Jones' cavalry. His brigade was in General Buford's division, and he would doubtless have succeeded that officer on his retirement a few months later and would have been the peer of Kilpatrick, Torbert, Custer, Gregg and Wilson as a bold marshal of squadrons.

GEORGE L. KILMER.

Familiarity With Snakes.

Familiarity with the snake breeds toleration. He is a lawless sort of creature certainly, with too many vertebræ and no eyelids, but he is not always so horrible as he is imagined. A snake is rather a pleasant thing to handle than otherwise—warm, firm, dry, hard and smooth on the scales, rather like ivory to the touch. He is also a deal heavier than you expect. When for good behavior I have been admitted to Tyrrell's inner sanctum at the zoo and to the corridors behind the lairs, where hang castoff skins like stockings on a line, I have handled many of his pets. I have never got quite as far as rattlesnakes, because rattlesnakes have a blackguardly, welshing look that I don't approve. But there is a Robber island snake about 5 feet long with no poison who is very pleasant company.—Arthur Morrison in Strand Magazine.

How Lead Pencils Are Made.

Few people are aware of the difficulties that were surmounted in the manufacture of the common lead pencil. In the first place the graphite of which it is made is rarely found sufficiently homogenous to allow pencil lead to be cut from it, so it is always ground to powder and then pressed into blocks. The great difficulty was to press the blocks until the graphite was hard enough to use, and for many years every effort in this direction was defeated by the crumbly nature of the material. Finally a device was employed that exhausted the air, after which the blocks were again pressed, and when this was done the material was found to be as hard as when taken from the quarry. But thousands upon thousands of dollars were spent in experiments before the result was reached.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Maidens Sold by Auction.

A singular custom obtains to this day in some of the towns on the Lower Rhine—namely, that of "selling" maidens at public auctions. For nearly four centuries, on Easter Monday—auction day—the town crier or clerk of St. Goar has called all the young people together, and to the highest bidder sold the privilege of dancing with the chosen girl, and her only, during the entire year. The fees are put into the public poorbox.—London Tit-Bits.

BRAVERY AND NERVE.

THE STUFF THAT MAKES GOOD SOLDIERS IN MODERN WARFARE.

A Genius For Getting Shot Is Not Valor, and Bravado Is Not Bravery—Courage of the Everyday Sort Is Good Enough and Is Not a Scarce Article.

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DEEDS of daring, like many other accomplishments fair to think about, are easier said than done—that is, it is easier to dream of glory than to seek it at the cannon's mouth when it comes to the pinch; easier to set up for a hero than to keep the scutcheon bright once it is bared to the world's gaze. I have written tales of heroism in scores and hundreds, fully expecting that skeptical readers were mentally calling me down for explanation of the mysterious thing called nerve or daring. Sometimes heroism seems to turn on accident, sometimes on luck and again on the nerve of the doer of a deed. Accident and luck surely play into the hand of the hero, but is not that simply because they give a setting to show out the deed in the best light? Doesn't accident merely furnish the occasion, luck place a certain man there and nerve do the rest, which is the all essential? Let some calamity pass without producing its hero, and there goes up the wail, "Oh, if some man of nerve had been on the spot, this or that evil would have been prevented."

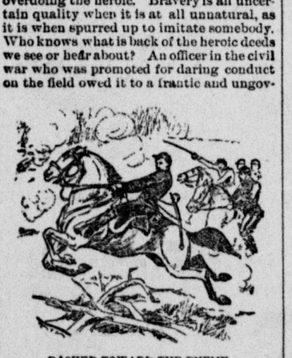
If the man of nerve happens to be on hand when needed, the calamity never takes place, and the trifling episode which answers for it calls out no gush for the man of the hour. The truth is perhaps that our jaded faculties demand strong sensations. We are blind to the stars which keep up their faithful routine vigils in the sky, only doffing our hats and rolling up our eyelids when the meteors and comets startle with their flaming brilliancy. Really, were it not for good old fashioned, prosaic, spartanlike and martyrlike, almost sullen and gloomy, stubborn and relentless courage, modern society would go to pieces. There are always brilliant hotheads to stir up a fight. There needs be the sound hearted men, with cool heads and thorough braced nerves, to carry the thing through.

There are several millions of men in this country today of military age who would be glad to know whether or not they possess the nerve to stand up and be shot at by people shooting to kill. This is something no man can know until he tries it, and he may go through one initiation only to feel the need of another and another. The chances are that out of every million there would be 500,000 good for a round of battles. One of the marvels of the civil war was the manner in which tender bred chaps shouldered their way through hardships and fighting. Bookkeepers, cashiers, counter jumpers, students, professors and lawyers touched elbows, with the horny handed, brown faced sons of toil, and neither class could say to the other, "Follow!" It was "nip and tuck."

The experience in our war was astounding when one stops to think we are Americans with thoroughly independent social traits. There is no such thing as caste, no acknowledged superiority and no class demanding reverence. Independence of thought and action is the boast of every American, and though it may be only a sentiment it is a hard one to uproot. The moment a man enlisted all his independence vanished. From being accustomed to think and act for himself and tackle his own problems in a manly way he became as a child, dependent on others to do the thinking, to order him when and how to act, or, worst of all, not to stir if he died for it. That was a lesson to completely upset the average American with soldier stuff in him. Schooled to healthy self control, he was called upon to practice self effacement. Many of our mountaineers and backwoodsmen were spoiled by having leaders set over them who didn't understand their material. Lieutenant Cushing of torpedo fame was let alone by his superiors the moment they discovered his weak points. He was good for nothing at routine work. Fighting on his own hook he destroyed the monster ram Albemarle, and, to use a common term, "raised the old Harry" generally. Custer was a man of the same nature. Sheridan did nothing on a large scale as a subordinate nor when pushed in his independent command, and Stonewall Jack on was an absolute failure when trammeled by orders and policy.

The fact that the American soldiers acquitted themselves so well is proof that the average man has the soldier stuff in him, and the leaders, like the men, believed so from the start. A man is more touchy on the question of bravery than on that of beauty. He'll go into his first fight one-third hero and two-thirds coward, but he won't know it and will come out thinking it is the reverse. Unless some one gives it away he will reverse the proportions the second time.

It is easy to give one's nerve a wrench by overdoing the heroic. Bravery is an uncertain quality when it is at all unnatural, as it is when spurred up to imitate somebody. Who knows what is back of the heroic deeds we see or hear about? An officer in the civil war who was promoted for daring conduct on the field owed it to a frantic and ungovernable horse. The line was charging—and not doing very well at it either—when the horse took the bit in his mouth and dashed toward the enemy's stronghold, carrying the rider through a storm of bullets, much against his will. The hesitating soldiers were not to be outdone by anybody and bravely pushed on in the tracks of the runaway, while the officer, who was probably shaking in his saddle, was gazetted for conspicuous valor on the field. But the men who set out to imitate such exceptional deeds are the ones who find that battlefield nerve isn't to be trifled with. If the needs of the hour inspire a soldier to attempt the feat, he'll get through or die in trying. If not, let him act his humble role and thank his stars for the nerve to do that.



DASHED TOWARD THE ENEMY.

However, it is not the occasional burst of valor that puts a soldier at ease on this question of nerve. He longs to be brave under any and all circumstances—brave by the hour, by the day, by the month and the year. The strain comes in with the long pull and the strong pull. Lieutenant Cushing's marvelous daring when he destroyed the Albemarle will never die out of literature and never ought to. But it almost found a parallel in a Confederate ram commander in an exploit on the Yazoo and Mississippi rivers. That was Captain Isaac N. Brown's battle in the Arkansas. The vessel started down the Yazoo one morning in July, 1862, and shortly encountered a Union ironclad, a gunboat and a ram steaming up purposely to meet and destroy her. During a hot fight, sometimes at pistol range, Brown stood out on the shield of the Arkansas exposed to shells and small arm missiles. A bullet wound in the head tumbled him down the hatch among the dead and wounded, but he climbed out again in time to direct the closing fight with the three antagonists. The Arkansas came out victor, and without delay Brown pushed on down the river, running the vessel amuck against the Union blockading fleet of rams, ironclads and gunboats. The run used up a whole day and was interrupted by three separate battles, but the Arkansas got through, able still to float and fight, though in a fearfully battered condition. A man with the nerve to stand out on the bare shield of a ram from sunrise to sunset, fighting her through the battle lines of three fleets one after another, falling asleep under the blow of a bullet and picking himself up to go back and invite another one, facing broadside after broadside of shells and volley after volley of rifle shots—that man may challenge the world in good faith for a test of nerve. His is the sort of mettle needed for modern wars in the long run.

Wild battle charges were not in high favor during the civil war, though far too many took place. The general most addicted to the vice was cured of it and lived to regret some of his battle orders. I once heard General Slocum declare while eulogizing a body of men which he commanded during the war, "You were always ready when called upon, and you never disappointed my hopes in you." That, he added, was the highest compliment that could be paid to soldiers. It sounded very moderate, wholly lacking the Napoleonic ring, but it grants this entire question of valor. To be ready on the jump when wanted, to do the work cut out, is to be an ideal soldier. Erratic genius is out of place in an army. Grant told Ned Buntline that his insatiable thirst for wounds and glory interfered with his routine duty as scout. Army headquarters demanded secret news. Buntline was ready to get the news, but he ached to be shot a la Texas Jack or Wild Bill, for spectacular effect.

Any man may well doubt his ability to meet the test of nerve for the everyday purposes of war, yet hundreds of thousands of average men went through it nobly in the civil war. The Union armies before Richmond and Petersburg and in front of Atlanta in 1864 numbered roughly 250,000 men. A third of them were re-enlisted veterans of the campaigns of 1862-3. They had fought at Shiloh, Stone River, Chickamauga and Chattanooga, at Gaines Mill, Malvern Hill, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. They went in for a second term, knowing that the last campaign was to be a finish fight; that the period opening under the Grant-Sherman regime was to be a period of blood and carnage. I used to look into the bronzed faces of my comrades in the trenches at Petersburg as they talked calmly of the hour when we should muster for a final charge on the breastworks across the line, perfectly astounded at the thought that those were the very same boys I had known three years before as soldier novices, whistling to keep their courage up at the mere suggestion of a battle. They had learned something meanwhile. They had adopted the profession of arms. Their calling was to fight, and fight they did, holding out for months and years with gallantry unsurpassed, with soldierly daring seldom paralleled among civilized races.

GEORGE L. KILMER.

A BULLET TUMBLED HIM DOWN THE HATCH

A "Correcting" Camera.

A London photographer has constructed an instrument to which he gives the name of the "photo corrector," the object of which is to regulate and correct the various proportions of the body, irrespective of the pose which the sitter may select. The result is that while the actual likeness is faithfully preserved, the hands and other parts of the body which are distorted by the ordinary process of photography are at once brought into harmony with the face and the rest of the figure.—New York Journal.

A Town Built Over a Reef of Gold.

Johannisburg in the Transvaal is a wonderful little town. It is but five years of age, and the inhabitants number 40,000. It stands upon a gold reef, and upon this reef 50 companies are at work, giving employment to 3,370 white men and over 32,000 natives. The town has gas, water, tramways and handsome buildings, while for 20 miles east and west the funnels of mining works can be seen.—St. Louis Republic.

M. Hammerly, a well-known business man of Hillsboro, Va., sends this testimony to the merits of Ayer's Sarsaparilla: "Several years ago, I hurt my leg, the injury leaving a sore which led to erysipelas. My sufferings were extreme, my leg, from the knee to the ankle, being a solid sore, which began to extend to other parts of the body. After trying various remedies, I began taking Ayer's Sarsaparilla, and, before I had finished the first bottle, I experienced great relief; the second bottle effected a complete cure."

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For the Use of the Right Hand.

The buttons on coats, etc., are placed on the right side and the shed of the hair in boys to the left evidently to suit man population by the right hand. The great philosopher Newton records that at first he confined his astronomical observations to his right eye, but afterward he managed to train his left. But there are persons who could not do this, owing to the unequal strength of their eyes.—Chambers' Journal.

The Music Lesson.

"Your little daughter, as she went out awhile ago, seemed the very picture of misery."

"She was going to take a music lesson."

"And your oldest daughter, who is now going out, looks even more miserable."

"She is going to give a music lesson."—New York Press.

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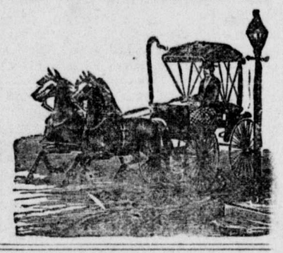

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Read The Herald.