UNCLE BILLY BUNTING OF WINSTON COUNTY THE MOST DARING SOLDIER OF THE SOUTH

By HUGH W. ROBERTS

How Youngster Tickled the "Grim Reaper" and Got Away With It

DOWN in the lower extremity of Winston county lives Uncle Billy Bunting. You would not at first glance recognize in Uncle Billy the man who was considered way back in the '60s the most daring soldier of the south. And yet the young man who for the excitement which adventures involved almost daily put his neck within the coils of the rope and quietly drew it back again, and the old man of Winston are one and the same, though separated by half a hundred years.

Mr. Bunting, or Captain Bunting, as he was known long ago, was in Birmingham last week. Unlike others who have engaged in enterprises, Uncle Billy shows no reluctance in telling his story, although his manner of recitation eliminates, or would eliminate entirely, his personal entity.

Those who came with Uncle Billy to Birmingham introduced the old soldier by relating a few of his thrilling experiences. One day, they said, he was captured within the Yankee lines. Between two cavalrymen he was instructed to ride to the headquarters of the commanding general. For a mile Uncle Billy rode, and as he rode, talked of men and incident and matters immaterial—talked, in fact, until his guards, thoroughly entertained, forgot for a moment the serious nature of their duty. And then Uncle Billy put spurs to his horse and rode away. He

was fired upon, but escaped unwounded, and within an hour was again under the protection of the Stars and Bars. And again, Uncle Billy proved that he was too daring—too daring in the sense that his spirit prompted others, less fortunate, to emulate, invariably at the cost of their lives. On this second occasion five Confederates, on a scouting expedition, were trapped, surrounded, and confronted with the muzzles of a hundred guns, ordered to surrender. Four did. Uncle Billy didn't. Instead, he drove his horse forward and escaped in a storm of leaden missiles.

"They tell a great many things," stated Uncle Billy, "which did not occur. For some reason, however, I did have a fondness for going into the lines of the Yankees, although I knew that if I should happen to be captured, I would run the risk of dying the death of a spy. But I always got away, and with a couple of horses, a cask of liquor, a batch of cigars, a side of bacon, a number of blankets, or other things of value which we needed, and afterwards used to advantage. But on one occasion, I was not so fortunate—although I did escape in the most perilous adventure which ever came my way.

"I had crawled on my knees by the Yankee pickets, and had managed to get very close to a tent which I believed to be occupied by General Burnside. At any rate, standing hitched by the tent was a magnificent horse, one which I thought would just about suit me. No sooner had I decided on the horse which I thought was that of the federal commander, than I untied him, mounted, and started away. And then behind me came the noise of the bugle

Disappointment Involved in the Strange Adventure of the Gallant Steed

blast, and the hasty tread of startled men. I was aware that it had become known that some prowler was within the sanctity of the enemy's lines, and I started forth. My horse, at the touch of the spur, leaped forward, and I smiled in satisfaction, although from the rear I could hear the thunderous gallop of a score of steeds. Every now and then someone took a crack shot at my head, and I heard the bullet whistling by. As I passed through the line of pickets, several men emptied their carbines into my face, but on I ride, smiling all the while.

"And it was then a race, a race in which human flesh was to play a puny part. The issue depended on the speed and the stamina and the steadiness of foot of the horses. My animal was doing nobly. I reached over and patted his neck and he urged himself forward with renewed energy.

"Onward we rode. It was the darkest night I had seen. The country was exceedingly rough with little gulleys and larger ditches. Occasionally the horse sprang forward in such manner that I knew he had jumped a fallen tree, or a fence of rails, or a babbling brook. In and out of the woods he wound almost at will, for I did not attempt to guide him. From behind on came the Yankees, firing and shouting. Onward I speed on the finest animal I had ever ridden. I felt entirely safe, and my blood tingled in the hilarious sport of deadly adventure.

"And, at the end of an hour, I should think, I saw ahead the light of our campfires. The pursuing Yankees also saw and halted. I dashed between our pickets and was complimented by the firing of rifles and cries for the guard. Very soon, naturally, I was under arrest.

"After everything was explained I was permitted to depart with no more serious punishment than a reprimand from the colonel. I went to my company, rubbed down the gallant steed, and was soon wrapped securely in slumber.

After reveille the following morning I told the story of the night before, the story the outcome of which was the result of the gameness of the horse. All of the boys wanted to see the animal. And we found him where he was left the night before. From a distance he was magnificent, and the boys were offering me boot to trade for theirs. But nothing could have bought my gallant steed—nothing at that moment could have bought him.

"We inspected the animal from head to foot, and the verdict would have been perfection, but for the discovery of an orderly. This individual had strolled by and stopped to watch. And finally he raised his voice:

"'Where did you find that old blind nag?' he cried.

"'Blind, the devil,' I returned, remembering how he had brought me out of the woods in the darkness without a bobble or a moment's halt to find his way.

"'Blind, all right enough,' returned the orderly.

"And he was right.

"For we hastily examined, and the good old steed failed to move a lid as we waved our hands before his face or shook a stick with violent threat.

"But I kept the animal," contiuued Uncle Billy, "and he served gallantly for a month. He was so powerful and so game and so intelligent that sight would have been superfluous. He fell under me, shot through and through, in Pickett's charge at Gettysburg."

In the Cause of Peace

From the National Monthly.

Quite a good deal of ridicule has been aimed of late at peace societies, because pacification influence was not strong enough to prevent the great wah between the Balkan allies and Turkey. Figures recently furnished by the World Peace Foundation, show that despite war and rumor of war, the cause of peace, while under a partial eclipse, has by no means been abandoned.

It is now possible to put a definite value on results toward world peace and arbitration secured in the various Hague conventions. Facts are now available for comparing the signing of these conventions with their ratification by governments. Signing of an international agreement implies only the acceptance by the negotiating officer of its terms, which he conceives to be in accord with his instructions. The document does not bind his country until it is ratified, and therefore ratification is the true test of a convention's success.

It seems that as against 583 signatures of conventions in 1907, there are reported 286 artifications, with 19 powers, totaling 241 signatures still to be heard from. Ratifying states have failed to act in 23 instances on conventions. Twenty-six powers are delaying action on the international prize court.

Doubtless the figures given here will be hailed by some as proof of the barrenness of international diplomatic conference. But that is not a proper conclusion, because an international conference can set down only what is acceptable to all the sovereign states participating.

Who Was Dead?

From the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

"I don't know whether the fellow was having fun with me or whether he was simply the stupidest man I ever met," explains the man who travels for paint. "He was standing at the corner of Superior and East Eighteenth street when a funeral procession came along Monday afternoon. I stopped to wait until it got by and I noticed that there was a band and a bunch of mourners in uniform. So I thought that it must be somebody of importance and I ventured to ask a fellow who was standing near me:

"'Whose funeral is it?' I asked.

"'It looks like the K. of P.'s but it may be it's the Maccabees,' he answered. 'I don't rightly know.'

"'Yes, yes,' I insisted, 'But who's dead?'

"'I think it's the gentleman in the hearse,' he said.

"He was so solemn and anxious about it that, as I said before, I don't know whether he was kidding me or not."

FAMOUS RELIC IS GIVEN VILLAGE

Grace Darling's Boat Presented to Newcastle

SAVED MANY LIVES

Lightkeeper's Daughter and Father Rowed Out to Sinking Vessel. Sweetheart of the Heroine Tells of Courtship

Newcastle, February 15.—(Special.)—Comparatively few American travelers find their way to Newcastle, compared with the thousands that find visit other parts of England, but those who do so hereafter should spare time for a visit to Armstrong college, which has just been presented with a relic of international interest. This is Grace Darling's boat; in other words, the craft in which the lighthouse keeper of Longstone and his fearless daughter rowed out to the wrecked steamer "Forfarshire" 74 years ago and rescued such of the crew as survived; a deed which made this girl of Northumberland world famous and her name a household word.

Grace Darling's boat, which has been presented to Armstrong college by Lady John Joicey Cecil, is of the type known on the Northumbrian coast as a "coble." It was on the 7th of Sephember, 1838, that the deed in which it figured was performed. Grace Darling was 23 at the time, having been born at Bamborough in 1815. Longstone, of whose lighthouse William Darling was keeper, is one of the Farne Islands, and when the "Forfarshire," which was bound from Hull to Dundee with 63 persons on board, struck the adjacent Harker's Rock disaster was swift, 43 of her passengers being drowned within 15 minutes.

The vessel was seen by Grace Darling at a quarter to five in the morning lying broken on the rocks. The girl was a superb oarsmen and at once proposed to her father that they go to the rescue, but the lighthouse keeper declared that it would be madness, the sea running mountains high. The girl, however, argued that if they could get to the Forfarshire some of the crew would be able to help them back, and finally Darling consented to make the attempt. With wonderful strength and skill they brought their "coble" to where the survivors nine in number, crouched. The solitary woman and four men were safely taken to the Longstone, and two of the men returned with Darling and succeeded in bringing the remainder off by 9 a. m.

This deed, so daring in itself, and so successfully carried out, thrilled the world. The lighthouse at Longstone, solitary and unknown no more, was visited by many of the wealthy and the great. Presents, testimonials and money were heaped at the feet of Grace Darling, and she was made the subject of hundreds of poems, but she did not live long after her change of circumstances, dying of consumption after a year's illness, on October 20, 1842.

But the man who was Grace Darling's lover is still alive, so it proved recently. This is "Jim" Giles, a veteran seadog who for nearly 60 years was a dockgateman and assistant engineer at Ipswich, and who retired only a few weeks ago. The story of his courtship of the Northumbrian heroine as told by himself is as follows:

"When a young man I took a cargo of salt from Ipswich to Sunderland. While there I left my brig and was made a coxswain of a coble that supplied Longstone lighthouse with provisions. This was in 1839, and as Grace's great deed took place the previous year I was anxious to meet the famous girl. On my first trip in the coble I saw her standing at the lighthouse door, but although I tried to attract her attention she got behind the door. The next time I visited the lighthouse I took a silk handkerchief full of grapes and gave the lot to Grace when I saw her. She thanked me, and we got on well. We walked and sat about on the rocks, and one day we paid a visit to Bamborough to see the castle. As she had to return early to see to the lighthosue I rowed her back.

"Grace was not handsome but she was passable, with dark eyes and hair and a face bronzed by the sea air, and conveying a sense of purity and innocence that I have never beheld in any other. She wore very short skirts and a dark blue Scotch cap, which suited her well. She was as good as any sailor, and could set a sail or pull an oar with the best of them.

"Her father, an old man nigh 70, was a very old fashioned man, and always wore drab knee breeches and buckled shoes, with a sparrow tailed coat, big waistcoat, and a round skull cap trimmed with fur. He didn't think much of my carryings on with her. Grace often referred to the loss of the 'Forfarshire,' but made little of her own exploit. She showed me her presents, including a gold slipper in a scarlet morocco case which the czar of Russia sent her. She was often asked to go to London, but she wouldn't leave 'daddy.' And, although I became her sweetheart, that was the reason she gave for not marrying, and so we drifted apart."

Had the Only One

From London Answers.

Only that afternoon had the traveling show arrived, but now the merry business was in full swing.

"Now, then, ladies an' gents," roared the showman, in stentorian tones, "walk up and see the live giant! He's the biggest giant you ever saw! Only twopence to see the real giant!"

Business was not very brisk, however, and the more the showman strained to his invitation. The man grew angrier and angrier.

"Come, come!" he cried, at length, nearly exasperated. "Who wants to see the giant? Only here for one evening, off again tomorrow! Now, walk up, please, and see the biggest man ever born—9 feet high in his socks!"

"Nine feet!" ejaculated the unbelieving countryman. "'E ain't 9 feet high! Why, your van ain't much higher than that!"

"But he's not standing up," said the showman; "he's lying!"

"Yes," retroted the countryman, as he walked away, with his hands in his pockets and a smile on his good natured face, "an' 'e ain't the only one neither!"

He Did

From Lippincott's.

A certain man was invited to speak at a political meeting and was placed last on the list of speakers.

Moreover, the chairman introduced several speakers whose names were not on the programme, and the audience was tired out when he eventually introduced the last speaker: "Mr. Bones will now give us his address."

"My address," said Mr. Bones, rising, "is 551 Park Villa, and I wish you all good night."