

# Jack Sterry, the Jessie Scout

An Incident of the Second Battle of Manassas, on which turned the course of the campaign and the fate of the Southern Army.

By JOHN CUSONS, Forest Lodge, Glen Allen, Virginia, Confederate Scout, author of "A Glance at Current History," "The Passage of Thoroughfare Gap," "Some Modern Pillars of State," "Principles of Cryptography," "Assimilating the Indian," "Scout Sterry," Etc.

"This way, General Hood," said the guide, gracefully saluting and pointing northward, as the head of Longstreet's column swung toward the east. The guide, well mounted and wearing the uniform of a Confederate cavalryman, sat at the forks of the road near the little village of White Plains, in Fauquier County, Virginia.

The road which General Hood was taking leads to Thoroughfare Gap in Bull Run Mountain, and it is the only practicable approach to the field of Manassas where Stonewall Jackson was then struggling with the army of General Pope.

Hood halted his column and closely questioned the guide, feeling certain that he was in error. And yet it would seem that the guide must be right. He was intelligent, confident, definite, certain of his instructions, and prompt and clear in his replies. He was a handsome young fellow with bold, frank eyes and a pleasant voice, and the precision of his statements gave weight to his words.

The situation was critical; no exigency of war could be more so. It was not merely the issue of a battle, but the fate of a campaign that hung in the balance.

Lee had taken the perilous step of dividing his army in the presence of an active adversary. He had sent Stonewall Jackson on a detour of some sixty miles to strike the rear and destroy the supplies of the Federal army at Manassas, and to cut its line of communication with Washington.

In an enterprise of this character the first step is the most difficult. The vital problem is to bring the divided forces together again. Lee's army must be promptly reunited, or its beleaguered wing must perish.

It was 10 o'clock in the forenoon of August 28, 1862.

The two wings of the Confederate army were only fifteen miles apart, but the Bull Run Mountain range lay between them, and the Federals under Pope were probably close enough to seize the passes.

Jackson's situation seemed desperate. He had been marching or fighting day and night ever since he left the Rappahannock, and many of his troops were dropping in their tracks for want of sleep.

At sunset on the preceding day (that is on August 27), Pope's camps extended from Haymarket and Gainesville to Bristow Station, but Jackson's daring exploit was to strike the rear of the bulk of the Federals toward that point, and in their efforts to surround him they were covering the mountain passes and thus barring him from a junction with Longstreet.

In this desperate situation Stonewall Jackson took a step which seemingly violates every principle of military science. Beeset as he was by overwhelming numbers he yet ventured to subdivide the little wing of the already divided army.

General A. P. Hill's Division was at Blackburn's Ford, on Bull Run, where it had snatched a few hours of sorely-needed sleep. At nightfall Stonewall Jackson dispatched that division on the open road to Centreville, thus seeming to threaten Washington.

But with the remainder of his command he quietly stole off to the broken country lying west of Bull Run and north of the Warrenton Turnpike, and there he passed the night, curtailed by the cavalry of Fitzhugh Lee.

This daring threat on Washington produced startling effects. During some hours the whole situation was changed. General Pope believed Hill's Division to be the whole of Jackson's command, and he therefore rushed everything to the defence of his capital.

His dream of crushing Jackson had departed, and for a period there remained to him nothing but the hope of saving Washington from capture and his own army from annihilation.

Night came. There was no moon, and a slight haze somewhat dimmed the stars. Hill's Confederates, in light marching order, encountered no obstacle, but the mammoth army of Pope, with its heavy batteries and ponderous pontoons, encumbered the narrow roads; while the troops—their eyes dazed by their campfires—floundered in the darkened woods and groped in the ditches and blocked each other's way. It was a nightmare—frantic in effort, yet unavailing in results.

But with the coming of daylight order began to emerge, and the Federal commander was again in the saddle—alert, hopeful, and prodigal in the issuance of conflicting commands.

Jackson's ruse for the moment had saved him! It had given two-thirds of his army nearly five hours' sleep, and by drawing Pope from the mountain passes had opened the way for Longstreet's approach. General Hill, having reached Centreville, suddenly doubled, and with swift secrecy by a forced night march swung back southward and reunited with Jackson near Sudley Ford.

Jackson Then Took Up a Strong Position, with his right near Groveton, on the Warrenton Turnpike, and thence gazed longingly toward Thoroughfare Gap, expecting Longstreet to appear.

Such was the situation when the guide's orders—back yonder at White Plains—would not only have taken Longstreet's corps away from the battlefield, but would have opened to the Federal army a clear course to Richmond.

The time was 10 a.m., August 28, 1862.

"Did General Jackson himself give you these instructions?" asked General Hood.

"Yes, General."

"When?"

claimed Hood; "what trains are you talking about?"

"Stonewall Jackson's trains, General. He is pushing them toward Aldie, where I supposed you would join him."

"I have heard nothing of all this," said the General.

"Then I'll tell you what it is, General Hood; those devilish Jessie Scouts are at it again—cutting off Stuart's couriers! Jackson has heard nothing from Longstreet since yesterday morning, and he's afraid you'll follow the old order and try to join him by Thoroughfare Gap."

"There is Jackson?" asked General Hood.

"I left him a little south of Sudley Springs, on the high ground commanding the turnpike."

"What is he doing?"

"Shortening his lines, General. You see Porter turned out right at Groveton last night, and McDowell took Thoroughfare Gap; and Ricketts was sent to support Buford's cavalry, who had seized the pass at Hopewell. At least that's what Stuart's scouts told me."

"You say Jackson's left is at Sudley Springs?"

"No, General Hood. I intended to say that his left was near Sudley Springs—about a half a mile south. Kearney and Hooker attacked there in column last night, doubling us up, and the enemy now holds both the road and the ford."

"That would make Jackson's position untenable."

"Yes, General; that's the reason he's falling back. They say McClellan Has Abandoned the James and now covers Washington, and that Burnside has arrived from the coast. Within twenty-four hours—the way they figure it—Pope will have over a hundred thousand men. When I left there at sunrise, Jed Hotchkiss had all the pioneers out. He was cutting roads and clearing fords and bringing Catharpin Run, for that's the only way out now."

"How did you learn all these things?" asked General Hood; and there was a note of severity in his voice.

"Absorbed them from the atmosphere, I suppose," answered the guide rather languidly. Then, correcting himself with swift utterance, he continued: "I beg pardon, General Hood; no offense. I meant to say that a courier absorbs details of this sort from the atmosphere of headquarters—the atmosphere of conjecture and apprehension—the atmosphere so rife with the counsel of chaplains and the strategy of medical men, and the theories of quartermaster's clerks."

Why, General, the very air is vocal with the enemy's doings! What with captured dispatches, and intercepted battle orders, and the reports of scouts and spies, we have literally no rest day or night. Then there are the revelations of prisoners, and the stories of deserters, and the never-ending chatter of junior staff officers.

I tell you, General Hood, we couriers hear enough in a day to fill a book. And on forbidden subjects, you know, according to the proverb, 'Jack knows more than his master!'

"Who and what are you?" demanded General Hood, who was perplexed and anxious, yet scarcely suspicious of treachery—the guide was so bland and free and unconstrained.

"I am Frank Lamar, of Athens, Georgia, enrolled with the cavalry of

that he had reloaded after yesterday's practice, and had fired the shot in question at another buzzard just before the column came in sight, but that he didn't suppose General Hood would be interested in such a matter.

The guide was mistaken. General Hood was decidedly interested in the matter! Guides do not practice marksmanship when on duty between the lines.

I, so happened, that the Hampton Legion had been recently assigned to Hood, and was then marching with his division. A message was sent down the line requesting Colonel Gary, who was commanding the legions, to report at the head of the column.

And then the guide suddenly remembered that he had never really belonged to Hampton's Legion; that the story was a little romance of his, and had grown out of a love affair. In the Shenandoah Valley, he explained, there was a beautiful maiden who had caught his fancy, but the girl was romantic and did not care for plodding foot-soldiers. All her dreams were of knights and heroes and cavaliers on prancing steeds, so he had deserted from the infantry and captured a horse, and his real name

was Harry Brooks, and he believed that in the stress of battle or campaign he could throw himself in the way of some enterprising commander and render such gallant service as could win approval; and when by daring deeds he had distinguished himself, as only a trooper can, he would confess his fault and leave the rest to fortune.

"Search that man!" exclaimed General Hood impatiently, for the General was baffled and still uncertain. All his life had been passed in active service, yet this was a new experience to him. The search revealed strange things. In the guide's haversack were little packages of prepared coffee and blocks of condensed soup and good store of hardtack, which facts the guide pleasantly dismissed with the remark that "it's a poor sort of Rebel that can't forage on the enemy."

The next discovery had a deeper meaning. In the lining of his vest were found the insignia of a Confederate captain—the three gold bars being secured to a base which had a thin strip of flexible steel running lengthwise through it and slightly projecting at the ends. Further search revealed minute openings in the collar of his jacket, and into those openings the device was readily slipped and firmly held.

"What is the meaning of that?" asked General Hood, sternly.

There was an air of boyish diffidence and a touch of reproach in the young man's reply. Its demure humor was half playful, yet modest and natural, and its effect on the spectators was mainly gratifying.

"Really, General Hood," he said, "you ask me such embarrassing questions. But I will tell you. It was just this way. Our girls, God bless them, are as devoted and patriotic as can be, but you couldn't imagine the difference they make between a commissioned officer and a private soldier. In short, I soon saw it was all up with me unless I could get promotion. Well, what was I to do? The War Department seemed blind, stone blind, to my merits, and as for my family influence it was altogether un-

availing. So there I was abandoned—herellessly abandoned—and all for want of a little gold lace! Well, as my country would not promote me, I determined to promote myself. And I tell you the thought was an inspiration! Yes, indeed; those little gold bars had magic in them. In a word, or rather in three words, I came, saw, and overcame, and the marriage takes place the moment this 'crucial war is over.' I'm sorry you're not attending to me, General, for I'm sure that if you would but deign to grace that occasion with your distinguished presence our cup of happiness would, indeed, be full.

General Hood missed all this. He was standing apart, talking earnestly with two of his brigade commanders, Colonel Wofford and General J. B. Robertson.

General Hood felt the responsibility

of his position—felt it keenly, painfully.

Communicative as the guide was, the General could not read him. He might be an honest youth whose callow loquacity sprang from no worse a source than that of inexperience and undisciplined zeal, or he might be one of the most daring and dangerous spies that ever hid supernatural subtlety beneath the mask of guilelessness.

True or false, his message bore on momentous issues; and it was not too much to say that an epoch in our history might turn on his slightest word—on the misinterpretation of a glance from his

Bleaming Black Eyes

—on the mere compression for a moment of his smiling boyish lips.

It was observed that he had related nothing, but what might naturally have occurred under ordinary chances of battle; nothing indeed but what he had seriously apprehended; and above all his statements were of a character which could not have been prearranged, for they were direct replies to our own questions.

Meanwhile the precious moments were slipping by—fateful moments!—moments on which hung the tide of war; the fortunes of a great campaign; the doom perhaps of a newborn nation!

And there at the parting of the ways sat our boyish guide—frank, communicative, well-informed—leaning on the pommel of his saddle with the negligent grace of youth and replying with perfect good humor to all our questioning.

We had every reason to believe that Stonewall Jackson at that moment was beset by overwhelming numbers, and nothing seemed to us more likely than that the enemy would attempt to cut off our approach by the seizure of Thoroughfare Gap.

If Jackson's left flank was really at Sudley Springs, and his right at Groveton, his right would be "in the air," and a movement to turn it would virtually support an occupancy of the mountain passes. This would naturally drive Jackson toward Aldie, as our guide had stated.

The whole situation was perilous in the extreme, and our doubts were agonizing.

If the Federals really occupied the passes of Hopewell and Thoroughfare, and then stalked forth, fully armed, and took my post.

"Pretty cool, eh?" commented Captain Christian.

"Yes, rather so," said the guide; "but, you see, I had my Yankee overcoat on."

"After a while there was the measured tread of troops, marching as if on duty."

"Half! Who comes there?" I yelled, branding myself and bringing my musket to the ready."

"Grand rounds," was the impressive reply.

"Advance, grand rounds, and give the countersign," says I.

"It was drizzling at the time, and a portly officer in gum boots and a Macintosh, reached forward until his chin almost touched my bayonet, and said, in a stage whisper, 'Lexington!'"

"The countersign is correct," said I; and the procession moved on.

"When they were out of sight I moved, too—but in the other direction, holding my course for King street, and intending to take the main southern road."

WOMEN SUFFRAGISTS OF ENGLAND IN AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN FOR FRANCHISE.

The recent opening of Parliament emphasized the extent of the woman's suffrage movement in England, as did also the election in Mid-Devon, when the royal procession at the opening of Parliament was returning to Buckingham Palace, three well-dressed women suffragists broke through the military cord and made their way to within a few yards of the king's coach. They were waving strips of paper bearing the words "Votes for Women." These papers were immediately taken from their hands by the police. One of the women fainted and the other two were removed by force. While the Cabinet Council was sitting at 10 Downing street the suffragists tried to force their way into the prime minister's house. Two of them, Miss New and Miss Smith, chained themselves to the railings of 10 Downing street in order to make it more difficult for the police to remove them. With very little trouble, however, the officers snatched the chains, and five of the ladies, one of whom had actually forced her way into the house of the first lord's house, were arrested. Before the magistrate they refused to be bound over to be of good behavior for six months, and were accordingly sent to the prison.

Leaders of the physical-force party in the votes-for-women campaign, are both strong believers in the value of physical force in the suffrage campaign, and each of them had the opportunity of testing the effect of physical force on themselves last week.

accorded, for many of us believed, almost to the last, that the guide was a true man.

But soon we were confronted by another revelation. Our guide's lined face, in blue marking ink, the oval stamp of the Federal supply department.

"Suppose you tell us about this?" suggested Leigh Terrell, of General Laws' staff.

"Well," replied the guide, "that take me back to the affair of Cedar Mountain. The Yankees shot my horse there and captured me. Intending to escape, I shammed sick, and they sent me to the hospital at Alexandria. Of course, the first thing was a warm bath and the next was these clothes, both of which, I assure you, were a comfort to me."

"Yes, yes," said Major Terrell, "but come in—hot and thirsty, all calling for drinks at once—I hadn't the least difficulty in picking up a musket and sauntering off with it. Of course, I waited a moment outside, and listened, so that I could make a joke of the matter if anyone had happened to notice me. But it was all right."

"Well, I lay low until 'tato,' and then went in the direction of the guardhouse. You see there wasn't the ghost of a chance for escape unless I could get the countersign, so I concluded to play sentinel and get it that way—open and above-board, you know. Presently I slipped into a dark alley and adjusted my accoutrements, and then stalked forth, fully armed, and took my post."

"Pretty cool, eh?" commented Captain Christian.

"Yes, rather so," said the guide; "but, you see, I had my Yankee overcoat on."

"After a while there was the measured tread of troops, marching as if on duty."

"Half! Who comes there?" I yelled, branding myself and bringing my musket to the ready."

"Grand rounds," was the impressive reply.

"Advance, grand rounds, and give the countersign," says I.

"It was drizzling at the time, and a portly officer in gum boots and a Macintosh, reached forward until his chin almost touched my bayonet, and said, in a stage whisper, 'Lexington!'"

"The countersign is correct," said I; and the procession moved on.

"When they were out of sight I moved, too—but in the other direction, holding my course for King street, and intending to take the main southern road."

meanwhile the precious moments were slipping by—fateful moments!—moments on which hung the tide of war; the fortunes of a great campaign; the doom perhaps of a newborn nation!

And there at the parting of the ways sat our boyish guide—frank, communicative, well-informed—leaning on the pommel of his saddle with the negligent grace of youth and replying with perfect good humor to all our questioning.

We had every reason to believe that Stonewall Jackson at that moment was beset by overwhelming numbers, and nothing seemed to us more likely than that the enemy would attempt to cut off our approach by the seizure of Thoroughfare Gap.

If Jackson's left flank was really at Sudley Springs, and his right at Groveton, his right would be "in the air," and a movement to turn it would virtually support an occupancy of the mountain passes. This would naturally drive Jackson toward Aldie, as our guide had stated.

The whole situation was perilous in the extreme, and our doubts were agonizing.

If the Federals really occupied the passes of Hopewell and Thoroughfare, and then stalked forth, fully armed, and took my post.

"Pretty cool, eh?" commented Captain Christian.

"Yes, rather so," said the guide; "but, you see, I had my Yankee overcoat on."

"After a while there was the measured tread of troops, marching as if on duty."

"Half! Who comes there?" I yelled, branding myself and bringing my musket to the ready."

"Grand rounds," was the impressive reply.

"Advance, grand rounds, and give the countersign," says I.

"It was drizzling at the time, and a portly officer in gum boots and a Macintosh, reached forward until his chin almost touched my bayonet, and said, in a stage whisper, 'Lexington!'"

"The countersign is correct," said I; and the procession moved on.

"When they were out of sight I moved, too—but in the other direction, holding my course for King street, and intending to take the main southern road."

"What did you do with your musket?" asked Leigh Terrell.

"Oh, I just rammed it under a culvert, and pursued my peaceful way. Well, it looked like everything challenged me. I was halted by camp guards, by street patrols, by pickets, by scouting parties, but, I tell you, that magic word 'Lexington' carried me through like a charm!"

Finally, on passing the last vidette, I was lucky enough to pick up a horse, and by dawn I was back with our own folks again. But, I tell you, I had a lot more trouble slipping back into our lines than I had in getting out of them."

When General Hood finally halted his column a number of troops had strayed into the fields and woods to pick berries, and it was afterwards remembered that the guide's attention seemed to follow those soldiers, especially such of them as wandered toward a certain thicket near the edge of the forest.

We were soon to learn the meaning of this.

For in that thicket a frightful secret was hidden—a secret which, if discovered, would doom that guide to a shameful death—a death of infamy, of nameless horror—his sepulchre the gibbet—his unburied flesh a loathsome meal for those evil birds which banquet on the dead.

Was there some pre-vision of this in that swift glance which he cast as he half turned in his saddle and took a firmer grasp on the reins?

There were those among us who thought so. Afterwards, yet he must have known that escape by flight was impossible.

In a moment, however, the startled creature was gone, and there was again about him that same air of negligent repose, that same tranquility of spirit which was enhanced rather than impaired by the amused and half scornful smile with which he regarded the scrutiny of those around him.

While we thus observed him, there was sudden commotion among the troops. Soldiers with grave faces, and some with flashing eyes, were hurrying from the eastward road.

They had found a dying man—a Confederate dispatch-bearer, who had been dragged into the bushes and evidently left for dead. He had gasped out a few broken words—his dispatches had been taken; torn from his breast pocket; he had been "shot by one of our own men!"

The situation now was plain enough. That pretended southern guide was in reality a northern spy. He had taken his life in his hand and boldly flung it into the scale of war. The danger against him was infinite, yet so superb was his courage, so sedate his daring, that but for those unconsidered mishaps he would have won his perilous way! He would have blasted at its fruition the matchless strategy of Lee; he would smilingly have beckoned that magnificent army to its doom!

Never perhaps in all the tide of time did consequences so vast pivot upon incidents so trivial.

Had General Hood followed routine and turned to the left a certain thread of events would have been inevitable.

Stonewall's beleaguered detachment would have perished. Longstreet's corps would have lost its base. Richmond would have fallen. John Pope would have been the nation's hero.

The troops—well rested now—struck up a swinging stride along the road from which the spy had sought vainly to divert them. Thoroughfare Gap was barely seven miles distant, and with that gateway in our hands the divided wings of Lee's army would soon be reunited, and the grand strategy of the campaign would have been achieved.

But Thoroughfare was not to be had, without a struggle.

Robert E. Lee had supposed himself to be measuring swords with John Pope, and he had therefore taken risks which he never would have dreamed of if battling with an ordinary adversary.

But General Pope had under him a warward soldier—Irvin McDowell by name—and when Pope ordered McDowell to rush his troops to Centreville, and get between "the rebels" and Washington, McDowell distinctly disobeyed.

The trouble with McDowell was that he had discerned the real nature of the situation.

He had commanded on that same field the year before, and he knew every stream and ford and road and mountain pass in all that region.

He felt that General Pope had been beguiled by Stonewall's daring feint on the Capital, and he believed that Lee's main army was approaching by way of Thoroughfare. And so instead of rushing everything northward to save Washington he rushed six brigades with heavy artillery southward to block Longstreet. The consequence was a race for the mountain passes, and a struggle for their possession!

The rest is history!

Before the Federals had made good their clutch on Thoroughfare the Confederates flanked the pass and won it! Thus Jackson reunited the North and the South in all their plenitude of strength were confronting each other, and the result was Second Manassas—that most dramatic and brilliant of the age—boldest in strategy, rich in episode, most varied in its changing fortunes, and altogether the best balanced and most picturesque battle ever lost and won on American soil.

India Baggar's Luck.

A beggar appealed to a Marwari, Arundo Mul, for alms, and received nine pice wrapped in a piece of paper.

The Marwari subsequently discovered that the piece of paper was a currency note for Rs. 500. The beggar has disappeared.—From the Allahabad Pioneer.

"Young man," thundered the irate parent, "never darken my door again."

"What do you take me for, a house painter?" asked the young man, mildly.

The seat of war would have drifted toward the Gulf States, and the great tides of American history would have flowed along other courses.

But these things were not to be. General Hood drew his brigades aside. The guide, or rather spy, glanced toward them, but remained unshaken. There was a certain placid fortitude in his manner which seemed incompatible with ruthless deeds.

There was something of devotion in it, and self-sacrifice, relieved, indeed, by just a touch of bravado, but without a trace of fear.

None knew better than he that that group of stern-faced men was a drum-head court, and none better knew what the award of that court would be. He had played boldly for a mighty stake. He had lost and was ready with the penalty he had vowed.

There was a strip of forest where the roads forked, and among the trees was a large post oak with spreading branches.

General Hood pointed to the tree, saying that any of its limbs would do.

Texas soldier remarked that there was no better scaffold than the back of a horse, and the spy, approving the suggestion, sprang light up and stood on the saddle. Half a dozen men were soon busy in the tree, fastening a bridle rein at one end and adjusting a loop at the other. As they slipped the noose over his head the spy raised his hand impressively.

"Stop!" he exclaimed. "I have three words more for you I am neither Frank Lamar, of Georgia, nor Harry Brooks, of Virginia. I am Jack Sterry, of the Jessie Scouts. I did not kill that rebel, but I was with those who did. His dispatches by this time are safe enough! I should like my comrades to know that I palavered with your army for a good half hour while General Pope

your precious old Stonewall. Now, men, I am ready—and in parting, I will simply ask you to say, if you should ever speak of this, that Jack Sterry, when the rebels got him, died as a Jessie Scout should!"

He held his arms, and his horse was led from beneath his feet. General Hood turned aside, and, in subdued voice, gave the order to march, and the column moved on.

The writhing figure swung for a little while in the soft morning air, and was still, and then, in behalf of the God who gave it, as dauntless a spirit as ever throbbed in mortal clay.

Within two hundred paces lay the warward body of the Confederate dispatch-bearer. "Aye," you may say, "but that is a different matter; he was a rebel!"

I will not answer that.

The youth lay there, stretched on his native soil, his head erect, his face, and his big blue eyes staring vacantly into the sky. He had been pitilessly slain—slain without warning, slain by a pretended friend, slain while doing his part in behalf of a cause which, whether good or evil, at least for him the sanction of a father's blessing and the consecration of a mother's prayers.

Lieutenant General William Tecumseh Sherman has said, "I have seen and written much. Many of his deeds and words will be remembered when The Commentaries shall have been forgotten. And yet the better half, the deeper lesson, of his voluminous memoirs may be epitomized in his own three burning and let us hope remorseful words, "War is Hell!"

The troops—well rested now—struck up a swinging stride along the road from which the spy had sought vainly to divert them. Thoroughfare Gap was barely seven miles distant, and with that gateway in our hands the divided wings of Lee's army would soon be reunited, and the grand strategy of the campaign would have been achieved.

But Thoroughfare was not to be had, without a struggle.

Robert E. Lee had supposed himself to be measuring swords with John Pope, and he had therefore taken risks which he never would have dreamed of if battling with an ordinary adversary.

But General Pope had under him a warward soldier—Irvin McDowell by name—and when Pope ordered McDowell to rush his troops to Centreville, and get between