

The SPY WHO WAS TRAPPED INSIDE THE LINES

HOW Captain Newbury Saved the Life of a Helpless, Wounded Comrade and Won a Union Commission

THIS remarkable story is supplied by General J. Madison Drake, historian of the Army and Navy Medal of Honor Legion, U. S. A., and has been taken by him from the records under his care.

Captain Edward S. E. Newbury, the hero of the tale, is now living in Elizabeth, N. J., hale and hearty, bearing no marks of the terrible experience through which he passed early in the civil war. Soon after the incident here set forth Newbury captured a deserter from the Union lines as he was about to join the Confederates. This man was the first Union soldier to suffer death for the crime of desertion in the great war. For his valuable services Newbury was rewarded with a commission of Lieutenant in the Eleventh New Jersey and served until June, 1865, when he returned to New Jersey with the rank of captain.

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NEWS of the enemy's plans or intentions, any shred of news, was eagerly sought in the fall of that bitter year, 1861, after the disaster at Bull Run, when Washington seemed about to be engulfed in a triumphant Confederate advance and the energies of the authorities were bent to defensive preparation about the capital.

McClellan was centering and reorganizing the new Army of the Potomac. Just beyond, at Richmond, the forces of an elated Confederacy were gathering. Between lay desolate ground, where neither side effected definite measures and across which the lines faced each other.

It was early in November that General Kearny, commanding the First New Jersey brigade, then stationed in Alexandria, just to the south of Washington, determined to employ scouts upon the hazardous work of feeling out conditions toward the Confederate position. The size of Johnson's force was a matter of wild conjecture, his swift descent was feared and Kearny felt that some knowledge of what he must expect from that able and determined rebel leader could no longer continue with safety. He cast about him for volunteers willing to venture themselves into the danger zone in search of information.

Scout duty, it was called. But that was merely a euphemism for the service of a spy. The men knew it. They knew that scouts would run extreme risk of capture and that swift and terrible punishment would fall to them if they were taken. It was no rose water service. The hardships of war, stern at the best, would bring little comfort to the Union man found hovering about the Confederate front at such a time. Short shifts and an unimpaired grave lay ahead of such a one, and in the event of success nothing better than the doubtful recognition and questioned glory accorded any spy.

Among those who offered themselves for the dangerous but necessary undertaking was Edward S. E. Newbury, of the Third New Jersey. Newbury was a native of North Carolina, where he had lived on his father's plantation until the outbreak of the war. Having made his way to the home of an uncle in Morris county, N. J., he had enlisted in the Third just as it was about to start for the front.

The young man was detailed with Corporal Thomas P. Edwards of his company to push into the country toward Richmond. Their orders were to use their best efforts toward getting word of the plans and disposition of the Confederate forces. For the rest they were to be governed by their own wit and by circumstances. With this vague commission and with full understanding of the perils ahead the two left the Alexandria camp on the evening of November 4 and hit for the South.

Edwards had picked up directions from a fugitive negro that would lead them to the home of Mr. Fitzhugh, a wealthy planter, who was known to be influential at Richmond. The plantation lay some ten miles from the Union lines, and it was the suggestion of Edwards that they should approach it in the hope of overhearing some conference or conversation that might prove of value. Fitzhugh, he argued, would be fully informed of the Confederate plans, and would be most unlikely to suspect the presence of lurking scouts. It was possible, then, that they might secure themselves on the premises, might even intercept a messenger, or in some other way show themselves on the track of information.

Close upon nine o'clock they grew into the plantation grounds. It was a moonless night, with a raw wind and low lung clouds that gave promise of rain. Making their way among the cabins of the negro quarters they came up to the house only to find it dark and apparently deserted. A faint light appeared at the window of one of the cabins, and, stealing cautiously across to it, they looked within.

An aged negro was sitting by a rude cot on which lay an emaciated young slave tossing in fever. They entered and quietly made inquiries as to the whereabouts of Fitzhugh. The negro, who, with her husband, represented the remnant of her master's body of servants, told them that the planter had removed his family to Richmond a few days before, but that he would return in a few hours with some friends before closing the house. The scouts hastened to take their leave, assuring the woman that they would return upon their errand next day.

They entered the house easily by way of a window and after cautiously striking lights looked about for a hiding place. But Newbury disapproved of the arrangement.

When they left the house again they took with them the bed, blankets, some odds and ends of food and a tiny tin cup which Edwards, for some inscrutable reason, insisted upon appropriating. They had cause to be grateful for that cup before the adventure was over.

They were tired, the bed was soft and the blankets were warm, and they had not been settled beyond the boxwood hedge many minutes before they both fell asleep. It was after midnight when they were aroused by the padding of hoofs along the frozen road. Creeping through the hedge, they saw five horsemen pull up before the residence and dismount. One was left in charge of the animals and the others, with hush and clatter, entered the house. The ruddy flash of fire reflected from the windows showed that the party was preparing for a comfortable session.

But the scouts did not feel secure enough to approach immediately, and, leaving their hiding place, they crawled to the rear of the house.

were several Yankees in the kitchen and, not knowing what other force might be near, they retreated. They waited for no more. Dragging the one who had been wounded, they rode away into the night. Newbury, reloading his weapons hastily, heard the pound of hoofs on the frozen road once more, clumping off in the direction of Richmond and finally dying away in the distance.



Once He Crouched in a Clump of Bushes While a Detail of Confederates Marched By

Their first intuition that suspicion was abroad came with the sudden cessation of the sounds of revelry in the mansion. Uneasy, though sure willing to abandon a situation of so much interest, they agreed, in whispers, to occupy the situation by crouching just at the rear of the house which was used as a kitchen. There were two doors to this kitchen, front and back. They decided that by concealing themselves within, each guarding a door, they would be safe from detection while assuring themselves from surprise. The corporal, accordingly, took his stand just inside the cabin's front entrance, while Newbury sought a similar position at the rear.

The men now listened intently. They heard nothing from the direction of the house. The quaking of dead leaves in the chill wind was all that came to their ears. With carbines ready and revolvers in hand they waited while the conviction grew upon them that the darkness held some danger that was circling and closing in on them.

Edwards, peering into the obscure mystery of the night, saw a dim figure fit across his line of vision. He gave a signal of warning to Newbury. A moment later the figure reappeared, still in front of the cabin. It stood for a moment and then slowly and silently approached. As the men came on Edwards backed gently away. The Southerner advanced until he blocked the doorway of the cabin, where again he stood, listening and watching.

The scouts called their breathing. Twice Edwards raised his carbine and covered the unknown. It was a point-blank shot. From where he stood the Corporal could almost have touched the man with the carbine. But each time he lowered his weapon, remembering that his mission was not to engage in combat.

Suddenly there was a sharp exclamation from the figure in the doorway and the darkness was split by a bright flash. The roar of the explosion was followed by a yell of pain from the Corporal, who, wounded as he was, charged upon his assailant, believing that the only hope lay in breaking through the ring of their enemies. The Southerner fled into the night, shouting as he ran, and Edwards sprang through the hedge.

Newbury, confused by the shot and the uproar, had only the vaguest notion of what had taken place. Not knowing that the Corporal had jumped for the open, he called him repeatedly by name and, receiving no answer, began to grope about the floor, thinking that his companion had been killed. By the time he had made certain that Edwards was not in the cabin there was a crackle of shots outside and the party of the house came in a rush for the front door of the kitchen.

Flight of the Party.

Newbury blazed his carbine toward the spurts of flame and, whipping up his revolver, emptied the chambers as fast as he could wind the cylinder. The attackers huddled for a moment under this vicious fire. Then one of them raised a howl.

"I'm down, Fitzhugh!"

The Southerners evidently thought that there

were several Yankees in the kitchen and, not knowing what other force might be near, they retreated.

They waited for no more. Dragging the one who had been wounded, they rode away into the night. Newbury, reloading his weapons hastily, heard the pound of hoofs on the frozen road once more, clumping off in the direction of Richmond and finally dying away in the distance.

"That tin cup is inside," he said. "Get me water." Making his companion as comfortable as possible in the sleeting rain, the private stole back and recovered the tin cup. His first thought was to seek water at the plantation, but he remembered that he was no longer in a position to risk encounter with a detachment. The Corporal was now entirely dependent upon him and he dared not place the other's slender chance

and he was tempted to abandon them. But he reflected that to be without arms in the enemy's country would lay him open to the attack of even a single picket, and he determined to keep them. Again he took his burden on his back and struggled on.

The quarter mile to the creek was made by slow and painful stages, but Newbury covered it at last, and once in the copse along the shore felt safer for the time. His problem now was to effect a crossing. The stream was too deep and swift to allow of fording. He knew that the bridge a mile further along was closely watched by the Confederates, who, in fact, were encamped on both sides of it. In coming to the Fitzhugh plantation he and Edwards had made use of a fallen tree, which gave a precarious support from bank to bank. He knew that it would be almost impossible to get the helpless Corporal across that prostrate trunk, but after searching in vain for a boat, he was left with the natural bridge as the only alternative.

More difficult journeying along the bank brought him to the tree, which was rooted on the opposite shore. It had snapped high and lay before him at a dangerous upward slant. He had good reason to fear that Confederate outposts were stationed in the woods beyond, and he proceeded with the utmost caution. He hung Edwards over the trunk in front of him, and, lilted along, an inch at a time, pushing the other ahead. At each instant he was forced to hug the support, clutching the Corporal desperately. At each instant he had to fight for the balance of both, expecting to be plunged with the wounded man into the waters beneath.

He had won to the break of the tree at the stump, some five feet above the ground, and was preparing to lower Edwards when a sudden movement of the Corporal flung his weight to the side. He made a wild snatch for the trunk, but was unable to regain his hold and the two men fell together and heavily to the ground.

A terrible scream of agony broke from Edwards. His wounded arm had been crushed beneath him. The torture was more than he could endure, and again and again he lay crumpled as he fell, the shriek was repeated. Newbury, in terror lest he should bring aid upon them, tried to silence him. But Edwards was now quite delirious. He raved, wailed, called his Maker and could not be quieted. Newbury had but one recourse. Raising the Corporal's handkerchief into the shouting mouth he bound his own about the other's head and, stretching himself at full length upon the poor mangled body, put forth all his strength to suppress the frightful convulsions that shook it.

By this heroic method he forced Edwards to lie still, listening while for the approach of enemies. Apparently he had reached the end. Still more than nine miles from succor, surrounded by hostile troops, weak, wet and famished, with a crazed and helpless companion, he might well have despaired. But it was not in Newbury to despair. Not for the flicker of a thought did he contemplate giving up the grim effort he had set himself.

Thought Him Dead.

After some time Edwards grew less and less insensible. His energy, called forth by fever and physical pain, passed. Suddenly he relaxed. Plan Newbury, bent over him anxiously, fearing he had died with that spasm. But the Corporal's heart was still beating faintly, and Newbury, hastily rearranging his sling, shouldered the unconscious man once more and tottered on into the woods.

All that day he held his course, more by instinct than by conscious direction, toward the Union lines. He kept away from the roads and from dwellings, laboring through fields and coverts. Once he crouched in a clump of bushes while a detail of Confederates marched by within fifty feet of him. He was unable to make more than a few yards at a stage, throwing himself down in the mud beside his burden to gather a little strength after a dozen faltering steps, scrambling up again and pressing ahead until he could go no further.

On, always on. That was the one idea he clung to.

After the first mile or so he was in little better shape than the inanimate Edwards. His mind was in a daze. Objects swam before him dimly. He had lost all sense of time or distance. It seemed to him that through all eternity he had been struggling on through a chilly hell of wet brown leaves, rain and wind, dragging a torn and bloody body. He ceased to think of Edwards as a living man who must be rescued. He no longer even cared to know whether the Corporal still breathed or not. It could have made no difference. He was capable of but the one purpose, to go on, always on, and to make the body with him. Without that single, definite hold upon things he must have given up and waited for death himself.

In the early part of the afternoon he slipped as he was trying to raise the Corporal and fell. The shock took what little force he had left for a space, and, closing his eyes, he passed into a painful and uneasy doze. While he was in this condition something stole into his brain that until now had found no lodgment there. He had done the best he could, a voice seemed to whisper; he had done more than any man, even the bravest, could be expected to do. Why not leave Edwards hidden in the brush and make his own way to the Union lines? Why not hurry on and get help? Was that not the safest and the wisest way?

He awoke with a start and a savage word on his lips. He hated himself for the traitor suggestion that had crept upon him in his weakness. Crawling over to Edwards he hoisted the burden once again to his back, gained his feet under the protest of every limb and went on, always on.

He afterward retained no consciousness of the latter part of that strange and terrible journey. It remained in his memory as a dark blot, hazy with vague horrors. But through the afternoon he still toiled ahead and through one more marvel he was not seen by the Confederates.

It was seven o'clock in the evening, fourteen hours after Newbury's start from the plantation, that the soldiers at a Union picket post started up with leveled rifles at a dim shape that came crawling and trundling slowly over the ground toward them. It gave no answer to their hails, and cautiously they came out to meet it, thinking to find some injured animal or they knew not what.

As they came up they saw that it was a man. He was creeping on all fours and on his back was strapped the body of another. They called to him, but he did not answer, only crept on and on. Then pitying hands took hold of him, and as they relieved him of his burden he scrambled to his feet, stared about him wildly and then collapsed. Private Newbury needed no close attention as did Corporal Edwards that night.

of life in peril.

A quarter of a mile away was Accotink Creek, which they had crossed on the journey out, and Newbury could recall no nearer means of procuring relief for his comrade. Hastening through the darkness in that general direction he came at last to the creek and filled his cup. With this shallow receptacle, which held no more than one good mouthful of the precious water, guarded carefully in his two hands, he set out upon his return.

Succored Wounded Comrade.

There was no ray of light to guide him. The way was uneven, leading across fields and fences. Twice he stumbled, and each time he lost part of the water. He had arrived at the cornfield at last when his foot caught in a trailing vine and he sprawled headlong. The painful trip was all to be repeated.

At the second attempt he reached the side of his wounded comrade to find the Corporal sobbing with weakness and discouragement. Edwards had made up his mind that the private had deserted him. Newbury propped up his head and gave him the few drops left in the cup, but the Corporal's fever had heightened and the small portion was no more than an aggravation. He cried aloud for more, and Newbury, comforting and soothing him, set patiently forth upon another journey.

He lost count of the number of times he went back and forth between the creek and the cornfield with the little cup that night, but when a gray dawn broke suddenly he was still at the task and Edwards was still unrelieved. Again and again he had traveled the way, mindful of his own weariness and content if he brought momentary comfort to the Corporal. But now the coming of day made the vicinity of the plantation doubly dangerous, and Newbury decided that they must get away. Not for a moment did he consider deserting the wounded man. His one thought was to bring Edwards off, for he knew what would inevitably result from capture, and he knew, moreover, that the Corporal must die if medical attendance was not soon obtained.

Edwards was now on the verge of delirium with pain and fever. He had no control over his legs or his shattered arm. Newbury fashioned a kind of rude sling from their belts, and, passing it about the other's body, lifted him once more on his shoulders. With the Corporal's sound arm drawn down over his neck to ease the strain he staggered off through the cornfield for the creek.

The rain had not abated. The wind was higher. Drenched and chilled, burdened beyond his strength and exhausted by the night and lack of food, Newbury held doggedly to his task. He was forced to stop and let Edwards slip to the ground through sheer inability to proceed before he had covered a hundred paces. He improved the halt by disengaging from his own person and that of Edwards every article that would lessen the weight. His revolver he had thrust in his pocket while he used his carbine as a clumsy staff. The carrying of the weapons bore upon him heavily

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