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A DEAD SHOT INDEED.

AWFUL HAVOC WROUGHT ON A DARING UNION GUNBOAT.

A Twice Tumble Albert and no Shave at St. Charles, Ark., in 1862—Will Malone's Valor on Both Sides—A Fortunate Shot and a Decisive Charge.

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HIGHLY as an American trait may perhaps be analyzed as the outcome of common sense and opportunity. There is no knighthood, no lady's favor in the breast to spur on weak human flesh, nothing much in fact at stake except success and reputation. Pluck, too, are all those influences, judging from the deeds they inspire. Here's a case in point, an affair quite unknown, although it was in its way one of the most desperate acts of singular bravery on record. Out of a gunboat's crew of 175 souls, that drove ironclad into an enemy of The Solid 125 perished and 25 were wounded. It was in the center of Arkansas, the second year of the civil war.

When the Union fleet and gunboats of Ellet and Davis had cleared out the Confederate fleet on the Mississippi above Vicksburg, the river flowing in from Arkansas offered a refuge to every floating thing that escaped annihilation at their hands. Gen. T. C. Hindman commanded what there was of the Confederacy in Arkansas, and scrutinizing that the Union gunboats might take a notion to inspect the interior of his bailiwick, he ordered that a stand be made at the bluffs on the White river below St. Charles, a point 100 miles from the mouth of the Mississippi. He sent to the spot two gunboats, the Pontchartrain and Maurepas, and 100 men—thirty-five of them armed. The thirty-five rifles were all that could be scraped together for the purpose. At the same time he ordered a Texas regiment led by Col. Allison Nelson, then on its way from the Lone Star state to re-enforce him, to proceed to the same point. Capt. A. S. Williams, an engineer officer, was put in command of the 100 men, the unarmed ones to aid in constructing the channel.

On the 15th of June the Union ironclads Mound City and St. Louis and the wooden gunboats Conestoga and Tyler, under Commander A. H. Kilty, of the Mound City, and the Forty-sixth Indiana regiment, led by Col. G. N. Fitch, were slowly ascending the river just below St. Charles. The lighting genius on the Confederate side was Capt. Joseph Fry, an old United States naval officer, who resigned in 1861 to follow the fortunes of his state, Louisiana, in the rebellion. He was a gallant fellow, tall, well proportioned, handsome, intelligent, modest and brave, a man with a pack history and a fatal future.

The approach of Kilty's fleet took the party at St. Charles by surprise. Nelson was not on hand with his Texans, in fact he had been detained up the river waiting for ammunition, which had yet to be manufactured out of lead gathered in kits from the country at large. He was known to be en route, however, making all haste to the rendezvous, and Fry decided to fight it attached. A few hours delay might change the odds that were for the moment dead against him. His total force, including Capt. Williams' thirty-five riflemen, was 75 men, seventy-nine of them manned on the gunboats Pontchartrain and Maurepas. The sailors were armed with pe-volvers only. The Pontchartrain carried two Spencer rifles and these were put into battery on the Bluffs. Lieut. J. W. Dunnington, of the Pontchartrain, commanded the battery and worked it with the crew of his vessel. About 400 yards below Dunnington's battery, Capt. Fry placed four guns from his own vessel, the Maurepas, in battery, and a short distance below that Capt. Williams stationed his thirty-five Rifleman Texas as sharpshooters.

This presented three obstacles to the approach of Kilty's fleet in ascending the narrow channel between the bluffs. Still another was added above the batteries. Capt. Williams had driven some piles in the channel, intending if time allowed to extend the barrier from shore to shore. The sudden appearance of the enemy put a stop to that work, and Capt. Fry sank

A BRIGHT SIDE.

two transports of his fleet, and finding the obstruction incomplete notified the Maurepas and quick her fastings to cripple the Union ships by his shore batteries while they were entangled in the obstruction. It was a desperate hope, of course—114 men and half a dozen guns against four gunboats and a regiment of well equipped soldiers. Yet every hour brought Nelson's Texans nearer, and wonderful things may happen in an hour or so. But it takes two to make an issue in war as well as duelists, and there was a man on the other side, or he is more exact, a team of men, quite a match to daring for the Rocky Confederate. The men of the team were Col. G. N. Fitch, commander of the expedition, and Capt. Kilty, chief of the little flotilla.

Early on the morning of the 17th Col. Fitch put his infantry ashore a couple of miles below the town and engaged Capt. Williams' sharpshooters. At the same time he fast, led by the Mound City, steamed up and opened fire on the bluffs and gunboats with broken sides shore. Fry's heavy guns were so ripe until the Mound City was within the second battery—the ribs taken from the Maurepas. A volley from these tore down a fold for from the fleet, and Capt. Williams was quickly hurried out of an position by the shell and canister from the gunboats and Col. Fitch's sharpshooters. Fry's guns drew his men up in front of Fry's second battery, and after holding the mound over he signaled to Capt. Kilty but he would storm the position by land. After this Fry's men pulled to the river bank, bore up to the battery and silence been, by stations Bro. Kilty returned back from the deck of the Mound City, he would take the contract alone. The land troops and sailors could not fight simultaneously, because the gunboats for except the ground where the land force would have to charge.

Capt. Kilty stopped the Mound City directly in front of Fry's four gun battery, and for nearly an hour a gunfight ensued at a lively rate. Meanwhile Lieut. Dunnington, at the upper battery, opened with his 30-pounder rifles upon the Mound City and Capt. Kilty signaled the St. Louis and her consorts to engage the lower battery while he cleaned up its enemy. Dunnington had planned his fire so as to give some distinct sport on the river bank, and Capt. Kilty passed the line and without silencing it and his vessel came out between two fine and within point blank range of both heavy guns. The engagement had lasted an hour and a half.

Fitch's men were in contact with Fry's skirmishers at long range, and showed themselves in full force. Capt. Fry, alarmed at this unexpected and formidable foe on land, sent up the river to Dunnington asking that every spare man should be sent him to help the fleet. Things were getting desperate, and Nelson's Texans were not in sight. Lieut. Dunnington was coming up as the guns farthest up the river, and having an unobstructed range on the crowd coming toward, he aimed carefully and planted a shot near her bow as the gun sids that was probably never equaled for effectiveness in any conflict. After passing through the side of the Mound City the missile killed three working the steamers gun beneath its path and then went through the mess room directly fore and aft. The gun deck was immediately filled with scalding steam, and a scene followed which baffles description. The fleet was forced to drift away at the time of the accident and kept on revolving until the best of its ship was close to shore near the Confederate guns. Description cannot follow.

From Fitch's position the accident was not clearly understood, but when he saw the vessel moving kindly about, her crew jumping bulkhead through the ports and from her decks into the water, and clouds of steam issuing from her hatches and her guns, he comprehended that Kilty and his Mound City were out of the fight and he could take up the contract so valiantly attempted by the unfortunate gunboat. Meanwhile the St. Louis, Commander Tyler to come firing, he quickly ordered his soldiers to shelter on all sides. While doing so he observed that Capt. Williams'

FELL WOUNDED AND UNCONSCIOUS.

sharpshooters along the bluffs were firing upon the helpless women struggling for life in the river and also upon boats sent out to their relief by the St. Louis. Word was passed along the infantry ranks to pay special attention to those sharpshooters and drive for the battery at double quick. The regiment moved up on front and flank and took the four gun battery with a dash. Capt. Fry meanwhile had left his post to consult Dunnington and Williams. Returning, he met the enemy advancing, and rallied his hundred for a final stand at Dunnington's position. There he was fell, wounded and unconscious, and was made prisoner.

The St. Louis succeeded in looking onto the disabled Mound City and having her ashore. She had been disarmed by all her unhelmeted men. Out of 175 officers, men and boys only 25 were fit for duty. In the compartments where the missile struck 45 were killed either by Confederate fire or the scalding steam. Of those who jumped from the vessel 47 were drowned, and 20 wounded were taken from the ship and the water. It was an awful shot and might have won the fight to the Confederates but for Col. Fitch's ready good sense and courage. Capt. Kilty's loud cheers upon the batteries with all his vessels had disembarrassed the enemy to such an extent that they lost their heads at the very moment when Dunnington's marksmanship so nearly put the gunboat out of the fight. As it was, Fitch carried everything, and the Rifle were passed as far as the town within an hour. Nelson's Texans were at hand, actually within sound of the firing, and an hour's delay on the part of Fitch might have been disastrous.

Capt. Kilty was severely scalded and lost an arm. He afterward came to the rank of commodore. Col. Fitch was a volunteer officer, minus an arm. He left the service soon after on account of disabilities.

Capt. Fry's later career was an exciting one. He drifted west after his exchange and commanded the famous blockade runner Eugenie, which always sailed under the Confederate flag. One day he attempted to carry a cargo of powder to Fort Fisher, North Carolina, while the Union blockading fleet was treating that work to a lively cannonading. Signals were sent him from his superiors on shore to save his crew and scuttle the ship, but he refused to do so, fighted her and took her safely in port. When the war closed Fry settled in the south, and in 1870 became commander of the ill starred Virginius, of Cuban revolution fame. He was taken by the Spanish authorities and, with 53 of his crew, was summarily put to death, although pretending his right to hold as a United States citizen.

During the war and at the time of the Virginius episode, it was asserted that Fry personally ordered his men to fire upon Capt. Kilty's subordinates in the who jumped from the Mound City to save themselves by swimming ashore. On the other hand, Capt. Williams, in an official report made four days after the fight, declared that he gave the order to his sharpshooters to shoot the struggling victims of the Mound City disaster. Dunnington reported that a boat left the Mound City drifted toward shore and failed to lower her flag, and this failing to come down, his men were directed to fire upon those in the water. Apologists of Fry state that he was not near the scene at the moment the firing began, and could not have been responsible. In fact, the Confederate inquiries rarely fixed under the same jacket with the early martial spirit of Fry on all occasions.

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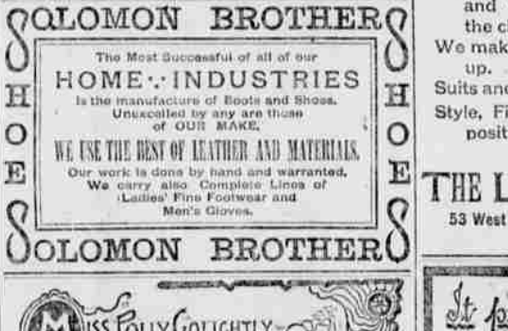

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