

JOHN BURNS, THE AGED CIVILIAN WHO WAS ONE OF THE MOST HEROIC FIGURES OF GETTYSBURG



JOHN BURNS

OLD JOHN BURNS.

(Extract from West Harte's famous poem.)

"Twas but a moment, for that respect
Which clothes all courage their voices
checked.
And something the wildest could under-
stand
Spoke in the old man's strong right
hand
And his corded throat, and larking
frown
Of his eyebrows under his old belt
crown.
Until, as they gazed, there crept an
awe
Through the ranks in whispers, and
some men saw
In the antique vestments and long
white hair
The Part of the Nation in battle there.
And some of the soldiers then declared
That the gleam of his old white hair
saw
Like the crest of the plume of the brave
Navarre.
That day was the outcome of war.

So raged the battle. You know the rest:
How the rebels, broken and backward
pressed,
Broke at the final charge, and ran:
At which John Burns—a practical
man—
Shouldered his rifle, unbent his bow,
And then went back to his bed and
cove.

That is the story of Old John Burns:
This is the moral the reader learns:
In fighting the battle, the question is
whether
You'll show a hat that's white, or a
feather.

WHEN Lincoln issued his first
call for troops a sturdy, old,
white-haired man, who had
been a toiler all his life,
reached with musket on shoulder from
Gettysburg to the recruiting station at
West Chester, Pa., and presented him-
self for service.
"Your name?" inquired the recruit-
ing officer.
"John Burns," was the reply.
"Your age?" was the next question.
"Sixty-eight," was the answer.
"Too old," said the officer, waving the
old man aside and summoning the next
in line.

For several days the old man remained
about camp plucking up courage.
It was in vain that he told of his ser-
vice in the war of 1812, or the part he
played in the battle of Sackett's Har-
bor and Landy's Lane. It was in vain
that he told of his service in the Mex-
ican war. Neither did it sway the re-
cruiting officer when the old man, to
prove how well he could shoot, gave
some exhibitions of marksmanship that
astonished all who saw them.

The Quickest and Simp- lest Cough Cure.

Better than all the cough medicines you
can buy, and far less expensive, is a
simple remedy that you can make at
home in five minutes. A whole pint of it
—enough to last a family a long time—
costs only a few cents. It is pleasant to use
—children like it.
It will usually conquer a deep-seated
cough in twenty-four hours. Two or three
doses overcome an ordinary cough. It is
also splendid for colds, bronchitis, in-
cident lung trouble, whooping cough, etc.
Granulated Sugar Syrup, 1/2 oz.
Pinex, 1/2 oz.
Take a pint of granulated sugar, add
1/2 pint of warm water and stir about 2
minutes. Put the 2 1/2 ounces Pinex in a
pint bottle and fill up with the syrup.
Take a teaspoonful every one, two or
three hours.
Granulated Sugar Syrup is a simple but
excellent solvent. Pinex is the most val-
uable concentrated compound of Norway
White Pine Extract, and is rich in all
the medicinal elements of the pine. None
of the weaker pine preparations com-
pare with the real Pinex itself. All drug-
stores have it or will get it if requested.
Strained honey can be used instead of
the syrup, and makes a very fine honey
and the far cough syrup.

The troops went away to the war and
John Burns, sad and despondent, put his
musket on his shoulder and walked
home to Gettysburg. For a few days
he sat about his home and discussed
with his neighbors the news that came
to them about the great struggle which
was just beginning. In all the north
there was no more ardent Unionist
than the old warhorse of Gettysburg,
and, with every report of the spread
of the uprising throughout the south,
he shuddered more and more over the
idea that he must remain inactive.
What did it matter if he was 68? He
was stronger than most men of 50. He
could outshoot any man for miles
around. He had been under fire many
times and war had no terrors for him.
One morning he made his aged wife
goodbye, and by nightfall he was
tramping along the road to Hagerstown,
Md., with his musket on his
shoulder, as it had been when he went
to West Chester. But they would not
let him at Hagerstown, either, so he
joined the wagon train as a teamster.
Within a month he was promoted to be
the police guard of the train. He was
with the wagons when he heard the
news of the cannon and sounds of the
musketry fire at the battle of Fall-
ing Waters. Dropping his whip and
seizing a rifle he raced across the fields
to get into the conflict. He was too
late, however, to get in the action.

THE CONSTABLE.

For seven months he served under
Gen. Banks, and then, it being mid-
winter he was sent home. He was
eager as ever for fight, but the exposure
of the camp only accentuated his rheu-
matism and the infirmities of old age
laid him up a good deal of the time.
In the spring he wanted to get back
to the army, but to keep him at home
the Gettysburg people elected him
town constable. In a little while about
2,500 inhabitants, such as Gettysburg
was then, the office of constable seemed
big to a plain, simple living old man
such as John Burns, and to dress in
keeping with the dignity of his posi-
tion, he wore a long, black frock coat
and a tall white fur hat. With his
badge on his breast he went about his
work each day, proud and happy, for he
felt that upon his shoulders rested not
a little of the duty of safeguarding the
nation.

For a little more than a year he had
held this office and then, suddenly, the
scene of war was changed from Vir-
ginia to Pennsylvania. Down in Vir-
ginia the battle of Fredericksburg had
been fought and Burnside had been
driven back, after which the two armies,
the one under Lee and the other under
Hooker, who had succeeded Burnside,
faced each other, separated only by the
Rappahannock throughout the latter
part of the winter of 1862 and the early
spring of 1863. Then, in June, Lee had
determined upon an invasion of the
north. If he could reach Harrisburg
and destroy the Pennsylvania railroad
system he would break the chief lines of
supply of the federal army. If he could
reach Pittsburg and the anthracite coal
fields he would ruin the iron mills that
were invaluable to the government and
would cripple the federal navy that was
dependent upon the coal from the anthra-
citic mines.

Invasion of the north was hazardous,
but so much depended upon it that he
was willing to accept the risk. One big
victory on northern soil was likely to
bring about the recognition of the con-
federate government by foreign powers,
and it would serve also to offset if not
minimize the fall of Vicksburg, which
Lee knew was sure to result from
Grant's invasion.

With magnificent skill Lee veiled the
movement of his army and kept Hooker
doubtful of his force until the whole
force was under way. Once it was re-
vealed, however, Hooker, hampered as
he was by the need of protecting Wash-
ington and Baltimore, acted cleverly.

ARRESTS THE CONFEDERATES.

It was on June 21 that some scouts
of Gen. Jubal Early's force, the first
confederates to reach the Gettysburg
neighborhood, were reported near the
town. Immediately upon receipt of
the news John Burns got his musket
down and, joining a body of 14 of his
townsmen, went out to do battle with
the enemy. Before his party had pro-

ceeded far they met some Union scouts
and were ordered back. A few days
later Gen. Early arrived with his di-
vision and took possession of the town.
He needed supplies and demanded them
from the town. Burns, as an officer of
the town, was furious and was so vi-
olent in his language to the confederates
that Early held him under arrest for
two days. Then Early and his division
departed and Burns was free. It was
on Sunday morning that Burns got his
confederates, one carrying dispatches
from Gen. Ewell to Gen. Early, and the
other a trooper who had lagged be-
hind. These he put in the Gettysburg
jail. The next morning he captured a
squad and threw him in jail, too.

On Tuesday, June 23, a federal cav-
alry force under Gen. Buford arrived in
Gettysburg, and after resting in the
streets for several hours, moved out to
McPherson's farm and encamped. The
two great armies now were almost in
touch of each other and it was appar-
ent that in the rugged Cumberland
valley and about Gettysburg a mo-
mentous battle was to be fought.

Buford had taken a position com-
manding all the highways entering
Gettysburg from the north and west,
and it was Gen. A. P. Hill's attack on
him that opened the battle of Gettys-
burg. Buford's men fought dismount-
ed, the confederates, thinking it was
a heavy infantry force, moved slowly.
But for this fact and the timely arrival
of Reynolds, Buford certainly would
have been crushed. Buford had been
fighting desperately for two hours and
was preparing to retire to Cemetery
Hill when he was overjoyed to see the
corps flag of Gen. Reynolds. The two
generals held a hasty consultation.
Reynolds, with his staff, had been rid-
ing far in advance of his men.

"I hope you can hold out until my
corps comes up," said Reynolds, as he
started back on the winding, round-
about road through Gettysburg to meet
his men, who were a mile beyond the
town. On the road the general met an
old man in a frock coat and wearing a
white fur hat. On the old man's breast
was a large badge.

SAVES BUFORD.

"Old man," said the general, "is there
any short cut by which I can get my
men from there (pointing to where his
corps stood) to here?" (pointing to
Buford's position).

"Yes," declared John Burns, and he
showed how a cut could be made
through the outskirts of the town. Some
fences had to be leveled and some
quick work done to open a road to
Seminary Ridge, but the minutes
saved were priceless.

After Reynolds' men had raced
across the short cut, Burns met two

wounded men of Buford's force. Both
carried guns, but both were so weak
that they barely were able to handle
them. The roar of battle had stirred
the blood of old John Burns. He
begged the soldiers for one of the guns.
At first they refused, but at last they
gave in to his pleading. He got not
only a gun, but a pocketful of car-
tridges. Then over the fields and
over the fence went the old man. He
came upon the Union line where
Stone's brigade was hotly engaged.
"I want a chance to shoot," he ex-
plained to Major Chamberlain of the
One Hundred and Fifteenth Pennsylv-
ania, who halted him and demanded
what he was doing.

The major passed him on to Colonel
Wister. He did not have to plead with

Wister. "I wish I had more like you," said
the colonel. Then he ordered him to
go to a bit of woods where the Iron
Brigade had taken position and where
he would have shelter. Gradually
the old man began firing. But the
woods did not suit him. He wanted
a fair, unobstructed view, so he left
the timber and went to a fence in the
open ground. Like all true mark-
smen, he wasted no powder. He fired
only when he saw something to hit.

He paid most attention to mounted
men. They offered a better target,
and, besides, they amounted to more.
He had not been at the fence long
before some of the officers, realizing
the excellent shot he was and
fascinated by the sight of this queer
civilian figure, surmounted by the white
fur hat, shouted suggestions to him
as to good objects for him to shoot.

Away across Willsborough Run an
officer on a handsome gray horse was
seen leading his men. A suggestion
was shouted to John Burns, and the
next minute the gray charger was
ridersless.

THE FALLEN MARKSMAN.

There was a lull in the battle at
noon, and the old man stretched out
on the ground to rest. As soon as fir-
ing began he went back to his
work. But soon there was a change
in affairs. The Seventh Wisconsin had
received little attention from the con-
federates previously. Most of the fire
had been at long range. Now the
confederates were pressing forward and
a heavy fire was directed at the
unionists. Burns, utterly reckless of
himself, kept to his position down by
the fence, shooting carefully but stead-
ily, showing no shyness and ap-
parently as cool as if standing in a
field shooting at birds. But suddenly
he was seen to reel. With some dif-
ficulty he saved himself from falling.
Two shots had hit almost at the same
instant. Both had taken effect in his
side. It took him a few minutes to
recover from the shock. Then he re-
sumed shooting. He was weak and
his hand trembled, but he would not
give in. A little later a bullet struck
the buckle of the belt the old man
wore to hold his trousers. This seemed
to affect him more seriously than the
wounds in his side, for it bent him
almost double. He could not speak for
a time and the pain was excruciating.
But gradually he recovered, and then
the indomitable man resumed shooting.
Nearer and nearer the confederates
were drawing and faster and faster the
old man shot. There was not much
difficulty in finding a target now.

But if he had little difficulty in find-
ing a target, he had more in firing.
A target, neither had the confeder-
ates. Another bullet struck the old
man, this one severing an artery in
one of his arms. A little later another
bullet hit him, this one in the leg.
Then he fell. He was very weak, but
strange as it may seem in one so
near death and one who had imperiled
his life for hours, his every thought
was of self-preservation. The con-
federates were pressing forward and
the Seventh Wisconsin was in retreat.
He was in between the two forces. As
a civilian taking part in battle he was
entitled to no mercy. So when he fell
and as he realized that the confeder-
ates would be upon him in a minute,
he hastily cleared himself of all proof
of offense. His gun he buried as far
away as his waiting strength permit-
ted. Then, frantically sweeping a hole
in the ground, he buried in it his four
remaining cartridges. As he patted
the earth down on them he could hear
the rush of the charging confederates.
Then he swooned.

WITH THE DEAD ON THE FIELD.

It was night when conscious-
ness returned to him. The old man
had been won by the confederates. A ser-
geant and six men were gathered up
the confederate wounded. They were
astonished when they saw the old
white-haired man in civilian dress and
wounded so terribly. They asked him
how he came on the field. He told them
he had been in search of a girl who
lived near by and was caught between
the two armies. They did not believe
him. Thinking he was near death they
left him. He was aroused a little lat-
er when burying parties came along.

He told the same story. They did not
believe him. When they left him he
became unconscious. A little before
midnight he was aroused by hearing
the voice of a sergeant who was post-
ing guards. It was raining and the
old man was chilled. He called the
sergeant and got not only a drink,
but a blanket from him. Then he fell
asleep. It was day when he awoke.
With much effort and with great pain
he crawled and rolled along to where
a guard was stationed. But when he
got that far he failed. He was car-
ried to a house in Gettysburg that was
crowded with wounded, and there his
wounds were bandaged by an over-
worked surgeon. In the afternoon
neighbors carried him to his own
house, which also was an improvised
hospital.

SENTENCED.

The confederates held the town, and
some of them were very insistent in
their demands to be informed how the
old man had been wounded. Gradually
the story came out. Some of his
neighbors who were sympathizers with
the southern cause told how he had
obtained a rifle from a wounded soldier
and of his violent northern sym-
pathies. Some northern soldiers,
wounded and prisoners, told of the
great execution he had done while sta-
tioned at the fence. Some one else
told how he had directed Reynolds's
corps by a short cut and helped to
save Buford from disaster. A captain
and a lieutenant came and questioned
the old man. Burns confessed that
what they had heard was true.

As a result of his confession he was
condemned to be shot and two riflemen
were sent to carry the sentence into
effect. Burns had been taken to an
upper room of his house and placed on
a bed. Down stairs a foot of
available space was occupied by a
wounded soldier. The men sent to dis-
patch the old man saw that a house
across the street commanded a view
of the room in which Burns was lying,
and they determined to shoot from
there rather than climb over the
wounded men down stairs. Possibly,
too, they did not like their gruesome
work. To go into a room in which a
white-haired man of 70 lies on a bed
with two wounds in his body, with
one leg paralyzed from a bullet wound
and with one arm terribly injured, and
to kill that old man as he is there
before you, is revolting work. So they
waited across the street and from an up-
per window they fired at a figure in
the bed. The old man knew what they
were about, and the same love of life,
the same cunning that led him to strip
himself of cartridges and gun on the
battlefield led him now to do a thing
that was almost as perilous as to take
chances with two more bullets.
Desperately wounded as he was he
rolled himself out of the bed and
crawled into an adjoining room.

The marksmen fired, but the bullets
did not find the human target. The
men I endured untold agony for this
was the third day of the battle and pre-
parations were being made for retreat.
They did not stop to make sure their
bullets reached home. It mattered lit-
tle to them one way or the other, for
that was a sad day to the men of
the south. Pickett's brave men had
been torn to fragments in one of the
most magnificent and useless charges

HIDDEN DANGERS.

Nature Gives Timely Warnings That
No Utah Citizens Can Afford
To Ignore.

DANGER SIGNAL NO. 1 comes
from the kidney secretions. They will
warn you when the kidney are sick.
Well kidneys excrete a clear, amber
fluid. Sick kidneys send out a thin
pale and foamy, or a thick, red, ill-
smelling urine, full of sediment and
irregular of passage.
DANGER SIGNAL NO. 2 comes
from the back. Back pains, dull and
heavy, or sharp and acute, tell you of
sick kidneys and warn you of the ap-
proach of dropsy, diabetes and
Bright's disease. Doan's Kidney Pills
cure sick kidneys and cure them per-
manently. Here is proof in the state-
ment of a nearby resident.

J. H. Willows, 2146 Monroe Avenue,
Ogden, Utah, says: "For four or five
years I endured untold agony from
kidney complaint. At times my back
was so lame and ached so severely
that I could hardly get about. The
kidney secretions were so frequent
in passage as to cause me to arise
many times during the night. Doan's
Kidney Pills were finally brought to
my attention and I procured a box.
They proved to be the remedy I re-
quired and the results of their use
were so satisfactory that it gives me
pleasure to recommend them."

For sale by all dealers. Price 50
cents. Foster-McIlburn Co., Buffalo,
New York, sole agents for the United
States.

Remember the name—Doan's—and
take no other.

In the history of war, the high hopes
of the north had failed and the
star of the south had begun to
set. So what did the life of one poor
old bullet-riddled man signify to
them?

LINCOLN AND BURNS.

It was a long time before John Burns
left his bed after that day, but when
he did he resumed his old habits.
With a new frock coat and a new
white fur hat that some one had sent
from the great city of New York, and
with a new badge, he again became
the active and positive representative
of government in historic Gettysburg.
People now looked upon him with
great respect. It was veneration, and
the old man became proud indeed. He
loved to tell the story of Gettysburg,
at least that part of it which he
knew, but he loved almost as well
to tell of what he did at Landy's Lane
and Sackett's Harbor. Then one day
Abraham Lincoln, president of the
United States, visited Gettysburg, and
the first man he asked for was John
Burns. They sent hurriedly for John,
but the proud constable said the presi-
dent ought to come to him, and not
he go to the president. But they pre-

ferred upon the constable to call
the president, for Lincoln was in
cemetery and the president was in
dress, a short address that did
not receive much attention that day.
The procession was formed on the
day of the dedication of the Na-
tional Cemetery at Gettysburg. The
arm in the arm of John Burns.
The Congress of the United States
did the legislature of Pennsylvania
for a few years he was an officer
in the state senate. It said more
constable of Gettysburg. In 1861
he died and the old man was
lately. Then in 1870 he had a stroke,
and after that he was in a
where. He died February 2, 1871, and
his bullet-shattered body was
rest near the field where, guns,
his old frock coat, with his tall white
fur hat on his head, and with his
on his breast, he won and died
in defense of the Union.
RICHARD SPILLANE

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things we like which are
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No. 9
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