
J. E. B. STUART

II. Harper's Ferry—Stuart's First Appearance

BY JOHN W. THOMASON, JR.

Captain, U. S. Marine Corps

The fascinating story of Jeb Stuart by the Marine Corps officer who wrote "Fix Bayonets!" now swings to his part in the capture of John Brown at Harpers Ferry and to the outbreak of the Civil War. From his army post in Kansas, he works himself back to Virginia against the active Union opposition encountered in St. Louis. And the stage is set for the appearance on the scene of war of one of the most glamorous military figures the world has ever known.

ACROSS Charleston Harbor, the morning of 12 April, 1861, three batteries opened on Fort Sumter, where the United States flag flapped in the lazy sea-wind above Major Bob Anderson and seventy-odd coast artillerymen. When the news came to Richmond, in Virginia, it was night, and there followed extravagant rejoicing. The iron cannon of the Fayette Artillery Company, in battery on Shockoe Hill, fired a salute of one hundred guns, and they rang all the bells.

The Virginia Convention, sitting in Richmond since February, and predominantly Unionist in sentiment, had up to this time voted down, or otherwise headed off, every plunge toward secession. Now it had Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops, Virginia's quota, 8,000, to force the seceded States back into the Union. Immediately all parties, Unionists, Moderates, Ultra-secessionists, coalesced, only Jubal Early persisting in forlorn fight for adherence to the Federal Union. Lincoln's call to arms drove Virginia into the arms of the Confederacy. Late at night, on 17 April, the convention in secret session passed the Ordinance:

"The people of Virginia recognize the American principle, that government is found-

ed on the consent of the governed, and the right of the people of the several states of this union for just cause to withdraw their association under the Federal Government, with the people of other states, and to erect new governments for their better security; and they will never consent that the Federal Power, which is in part their power, shall be exerted for the purpose of subjecting such states to the Federal Authority."

There was hardly a conception, among the people, of the superiority of the North in resources and potential power. Very few Southerners—although among these few were Mr. Jefferson Davis and some thoughtful men who had seen the North and gauged its temper and measured its strength—believed that war would follow secession. Of course, when you examined the census returns, there were more people up there; but quality—not quantity—is what counts in a horse-race, said the local wise men. It was widely considered that those Yankees, with their amusing President, were men of business and would not fight beyond the marts of trade. And, if they did, the very niggers in the field knew that Europe couldn't get along without cotton. In the unlikely event that help was needed, England and France, hindered in their vital trade, would be right over, with ships and

men. This last was a fatal illusion, obscuring vision in the high places of the South to the very end of the war. And the States went out, joyously.

"Virginians, to arms!" bawled the Richmond *Enquirer*. "For the 3rd time in 241 years you are called on to take up arms in defense of your homes against the invasion of the foe!" Thus, to the 24th of April. On the 23d Governor Letcher had named his Advisory Council, Judge Allen, Colonel Smith (of V. M. I.), Captain Matthew Fontaine Maury, late U. S. N.

In the State Library at Richmond there are files on files of correspondence for the last days of April and the month of May, handled by Governor Letcher and this council. The tough rag paper is yellowed and the ink a little dim, but the clear longhand script is perfectly legible. Every sort of person wrote. People sent in petitions, testimonials, appreciations, complaints, addresses, and declarations of patriotism, and canny commercial propositions. On each document are indorsed the date of receipt and the action taken or action deferred.

Among them there was a letter from Mrs. Elizabeth Pannill Stuart, born a Pannill of Pittsylvania, widow of the late Archibald Stuart of Augusta, and kin to the Letchers of Rockbridge, to solicit an appointment in the Virginia State forces for her son, Lieutenant James Ewell Brown Stuart, formerly of the 1st United States Cavalry Regiment, who had resigned from the Federal army and was now hastening to Virginia from his last station in the Territory of Kansas.

In due time Lieutenant Stuart reported in Richmond, having resigned his United States commission, and he was named major of infantry in the Virginia State forces on 6 May. Virginians are never so occupied that they cannot take

time to recall the past, and men remembered the young cavalry officer who had a part in the suppression of the John Brown raid a year and a half before. Indeed, there was a report that it had been Stuart's sword which cut down old Osawatomie at Harpers Ferry. This detail was not true, as Stuart himself declared then and afterward, but it was his first appearance on the Virginia scene, and the story is worth telling.

J. E. B. Stuart, in 1859, was a lieutenant in the 1st United States Cavalry Regiment, stationed in Kansas Territory. That year he obtained a six months' leave of absence and took his family back to Virginia, visiting his people around Abingdon and Saltville and Laurel Hill. On 5 October of that year the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church met in Richmond, and Lieutenant Stuart, to whom church matters were always of first importance, attended the convention as a lay delegate. At the end of the second week in October he went up to Washington to call on the Secretary of War. He had invented and patented an improved device for attaching the cavalryman's sabre to the belt, and he was attempting to sell the patent to the War Department. On Monday, 17 October, he was waiting for an interview in the anteroom of the Secretary.

In the late summer of this year a gimlet-eyed old party who gave his name as Smith had leased a farm in western Maryland, a few miles from the Potomac River at Harpers Ferry, where the important United States arsenal was located. The fact had occasioned no comment. Mr. Smith, or Captain Smith, as people called him, had given out that he was going to make a crop, after the habit of the region. Sunday night, 16 October, 1859, this Smith, with some

twenty men, whites and negroes, a number of Sharpe's rifles, and a selection of cutlasses and pikes, had appeared in Harpers Ferry about the time that the citizens were proceeding home from church and going to bed. They had also cut the telegraph wires. There were no soldiers attached to the arsenal, and Harpers Ferry was a small town, and the raiders quickly had possession of it. Details of the force went out into the country and dragged citizens from their sleep, bringing them in as hostages. Among these hostages was Colonel Lewis Washington, a grandnephew of George Washington. When Monday morning came the local militia began to assemble, and there was some shooting. The raiders, who had first established themselves in the armory, were driven out of it and took refuge in the stout, windowless stone house on the arsenal grounds, in which the fire-engines and hose-carts were stored. Some of them were killed, and some citizens.

In the afternoon the news, relayed through Frederick and Baltimore by officials of the railroad, reached Richmond. The first bulletin was: "There is trouble of some sort at Harpers Ferry. A party of workmen have seized the Government Armory." This was amplified by the next: "The men at Harpers Ferry are not workmen. They are Kansas Border Ruffians, who have attacked and captured the place, fired upon and killed several unarmed citizens, and captured Colonel Washington and other prominent citizens of the neighborhood. We cannot understand their plans or ascertain their numbers." Governor Wise of Virginia was roused from his siesta to read these messages, and he at once telegraphed orders to Colonel John Thomas Gibson, of Charlestown, which is a few miles west of Harpers Ferry, to raise the militia infantry in the region, and simi-

lar orders to Colonel Robert W. Baylor, commanding the 3rd Regiment of Militia Cavalry. He himself called out the Richmond regiment and prepared to accompany them to the scene by special train. Incidentally, the local troops were already out and swapping shots with the raiders—at long range—and Maryland militiamen were crowding down to the river from the north.

The news reached Washington a little earlier than it came to Richmond. During the forenoon, while Lieutenant Stuart waited for his interview, one came out of the Secretary's office, and asked him if he would take an important note over to Lieutenant-Colonel Robert E. Lee, who was then at his home, Arlington, on leave from his command in Texas. A forward-looking youngster would be eager for any contact with the admired staff captain of General Scott, the officer who was regarded as the coming man in the army, and Stuart took the envelope and rode out through Georgetown and across the Potomac with it. What he carried was the order for Lieutenant-Colonel Lee to proceed by special train to Harpers Ferry and suppress the disorder reported at that place. Stuart, who heard of it for the first time (it was not made public in Washington until afternoon), asked and obtained permission to go along with the Lieutenant-Colonel as aide. They left Washington by special train at five o'clock in the afternoon.

In the meantime, there being no soldiers available, Chief Clerk Walsh of the Navy Department had gone at noon to the marine barracks, and ascertained from the officer of the day that there were ninety marines at hand. These were ordered out by the Secretary of the Navy, "furnished with a proper number of ball-cartridges, ammunition, and rations, and . . . two howitzers and

schrapnel" and placed aboard the 3.30 train, under the command of Lieutenant Israel Green, U. S. M. C. Green's orders were to report to the senior army officer present at Harpers Ferry, if there was an army officer there, and otherwise to "take such measures as in his judgment may be necessary to protect the Arsenal and other property of the United States." At Frederick the marines were ordered to wait at Sandy Hook—a mile short of the Ferry—for Lieutenant-Colonel Lee, and at ten o'clock Lee and Stuart came up, and the force marched across the bridge and entered the armory grounds. It had grown dark, and the Virginia militia had the engine-house closely surrounded. They were relieved by the marines, and drew off to a distance. At daylight Lieutenant-Colonel Lee directed Green to form a storming party, with a second party to support it. The howitzers had been left on the cars. Orders were given to the marines not to fire, for the safety of the hostages penned up with the raiders. There is a story that Lee, as a courtesy to Virginia, offered the militia the honor of going in after them, but that the militia declined, on the ground that some of their friends, the hostages, might be hurt by them, and they couldn't bear the idea. Governor Wise was scathing in his remarks about his militia afterward.

At 6.30 o'clock, in the misty October morning, Lee sent his aide forward with a note to the men in the engine-house. If they came out and surrendered, wrote Lee, their lives would be protected, and they would be held in safety for such disposition as the proper legal authorities saw fit to make of them. Otherwise the marines would come in and get them. Stuart was directed to present this note, and to take the answer—yes or no. He was not to parley. The marines covered the rear of the engine-house, which

had no exit, and the storming parties—twelve leathernecks to each, Green's biggest men—stood in readiness at the front, at forty yards' distance. Lee sat on a horse under a tree, near by, and Green walked a little way forward with Stuart: they arranged that, if the men inside refused to give themselves up, Stuart was to jump aside and wave his hat, and the marines would come on the run.

The engine-house was perhaps thirty by thirty-five feet, longer than deep. Large double doors opened from the front of it, with stone abutment between them. The doors were of massive oak construction, iron-bound and studded with metal. Inside, a fire-engine habitually stood behind each door, and the hose-cart in the centre, behind the abutment. Stuart approached the door on the right. It opened a little, and a gimlet-eyed old fellow, whom Stuart recognized perfectly as Osawatimie Brown of Kansas, held a cocked carbine on him and received the note. No; he would not surrender, but he had a counter-proposition, and he proceeded at length to set it forth. He and his men were to be allowed to come out; to be given a specified start on the pursuit—Stuart jumped away from the door and waved his hat. Green says it was a feathered hat, of a type afterward famous.

The marines, in dark-blue frocks, with sky-blue trousers and white belts, and armed with sledges from the armory, came at the double, and thundered mightily against the door, without effect. Inside, they fired with carbines through the door, and the powder smoke seeped out around the edges of the timbers. A long, heavy ladder lay on the ground in front of the engine-house, and Green cried to his men to take that ladder and batter with it. They caught it up, ran back, dashed it against the door;

ran back, and assaulted the door again. At the second blow the right-hand section broke in, low down, and the timbers splintered upward. Green, who stood with Stuart between the doors, dived through the opening, his sword in front of him. Inside, the place was full of smoke: Green thinks that old Brown had just emptied his carbine, and was reloading, and so he passed safely. No other of Brown's party seems to have fired. Green ran to the right of the engine at the door, passed behind it, and came to the centre of the enclosure, by the hose-cart, where Colonel Lewis Washington was standing. Colonel Washington was a man of serene habit. He gave Lieutenant Green a clasp of the hand, for they were acquaintances, and he said, "Hello, Green." And he added, "This is Osawatomie—" indicating a kneeling figure, dim in the smoke, a pace to the left. In those quick seconds while Green doubled around the engine, old Brown had been in action: the first two marines who followed their officer through the hole were down, one shot through the belly and the other through the face. Green saw "an old man kneeling with a carbine in his hand, with a long gray beard falling away from his face, looking quickly and keenly toward the danger that he was aware had come upon him"—and he slashed powerfully at that old man's head. He missed the head, for Old Brown dodged, but the blade bit deeply into the neck at the base of the skull, and as Old Brown, stunned, rolled sideways, Green thrust, and a leather strap on Old Brown's chest took the point, and the light-dress sword bent almost double. Now the marines were through the smoke and over the fallen men, and they bayoneted one fellow skulking under the engine, and pinned another against the rear wall, so that they died. And

Lieutenant Green ordered them "to spill no more blood."

Presently Old Brown lay on the grass outside, and the men with him were all dead, or prisoners, and the hostages were liberated. Colonel Lewis Washington was a fastidious man, and he had been without toilet facilities in the engine-house, and he delayed to draw his kid gloves over his unwashed hands before he would come to pay his respect to Lieutenant-Colonel Lee. They moved Old Brown on a mattress to the jail at Charlestown, and Governor Wise, arriving that day, saw him in prison, and has recorded his admiration of his courage, quite aside from his reaction to Old Brown's politics and ambitions. "He was the gamest man I ever saw." And the governor likened his attitude then to a "broken-winged hawk, lying on his back, with a fearless eye, and his talons set for further fight, if need be—" There was no exultation over him, when he was received from the Federal forces by Virginia, or at his trial, or at his hanging. . . .

The next day Old Brown, recovered from the shocks of his wounds, talked freely to the governor, and to the military officers, and to the newspaper persons who had rushed more lately to the scene. He came, he said, on a Christian mission; he was a man of good will. He desired not to harm anybody, but to free an oppressed people. He dwelt at length on the purity of his motives and on his high inspiration, and said that he was justified in all his acts. Lieutenant Stuart listened, and he was the only man present who could identify Old Brown as the Osawatomie Brown of Bleeding Kansas, for out there he had ridden, with Colonel Sumner's cavalry, to liberate certain victims of Osawatomie on the troubled Kansas marches, and had met him in the section where mayhems, ar-

sons, and murders, with attendant horse-theft and nigger-stealing, had marked him in abolition circles as a rising man. He said now, "But, Captain Brown, don't you believe the Bible?"

To this Old Brown returned no answer. He remarked, looking at Stuart, "I believe that the major, here, would not have been alive but for me. I might have killed him, just as easy as I could kill a mosquito, when he came in, but I supposed that he came in only to receive our surrender. . . ." And he added that he called surrender, as loud as he could, before the marines attacked him, and that they killed his people and wounded him after they had given up. This Lieutenant Green denied in all its details. . . . Colonel Washington left no written evidence. But Green reported, and Stuart wrote immediately to his mother. All other testimony must be hearsay.

And Old Brown spoke to them again, looking up from his mattress with his hard, pale, killer's eye, to the governor of Virginia, and the marine, and the brown-bearded cavalryman, and the militia officers, and the craning reporters: "I claim to be here in carrying out a measure I believe to be perfectly justifiable, and not to act the part of an incendiary or a ruffian—but, on the contrary, to aid those suffering of a great wrong. I wish to say, further, that you had better, all you people of the South, prepare yourselves for a settlement of this question. It must come up for settlement sooner than you are prepared for it, and the sooner you commence that preparation the better for you. You may dispose of me very easily: I am nearly disposed of now; but this question is still to be settled—this negro question, I mean. The end is not yet."

So, in material effect, the assault on

Virginia by Old Brown, Old Osawatomie, Old John Brown, Captain Smith, was a moderately bloody failure. He freed no slaves at all. Colonel Washington's negroes, a batch of whom he seized when he took the Colonel, refused to participate in the defense of the engine-house. Others fled from him; none rose to join him. He accomplished the death of a few citizens, a free negro employed by the railroad, and a United States marine. He died, himself, at the end of a rope, and his followers suffered with him. The dead were buried, and remembered as the dead are, with appropriate emotions, and the glaziers of the armory replaced the broken glass in the windows of the government buildings, and artificers repaired the shattered door of the engine-house at Harpers Ferry, and Governor Wise told them at Richmond that something drastic would have to be done about the militia: they were too inefficient, and in Colonel John Thomas Gibson's whole regiment there were not more than one hundred serviceable muskets. But the echoes of the affair reverberated monstrously.

Virginia, and the South after her, took the riot and the ensuing trials at Charlestown with surprising calm. There was a vast excitement in the North. The Southerners presently learned, with shocked incredulity which turned to anger, that old Brown was rather widely regarded, up there, as a man of consecrated life: in effect, a martyr. From New Hampshire came the voice of a minister of the Gospel, at a meeting for prayer on the day of the hanging at Charlestown: old Brown "died for righteousness' sake!" A New York paper declared, on the exchange desks of Southern editors, "That gallows's as glorious as a cross!" The South became very angry indeed. Old Brown, to them, meant servile insurrection, and men remem-

bered Nat Turner in Southampton County. It appeared that these Northern people, furiously vociferous, at the extreme applauded, and at the mean did not condemn, the fomenting of a slave uprising in a peaceful, unoffending sister State. They were out to free the slaves at any cost in blood and tears. And slaves were property, like horses and land and cattle, and whether a man owned any or not—most Southerners owned no slaves and never expected to—what Virginia did about it was not the affair of Massachusetts. The South began to regard the ties which bound it to such people as undesirable and actively dangerous. Old Brown, being well dead at Charlestown, became a national issue: who is not with us is against us! The part he played in the elections of 1860 would have gratified him immensely. He worked powerfully in the minds of men, North and South, and he was more effective, dead, than he had ever been in all his stammering and futile life.

You conceive that Lieutenant Stuart had fine tales to tell when he went back to duty at Fort Riley, and he told a story well. The officers in those far places had their news from home infrequently, and there was time to examine from every angle, to discuss and digest, each budget of letters and papers before the next one came. Yet it does not appear that political talk had much part in the life of the army posts. A man's politics, if he had any, were those of his section. Rawle's "Constitutional Law," the text-book studied by that generation at West Point, enunciated clearly the doctrine of state sovereignty, and no reasonable person questioned it. When disunion began to be mentioned, increasingly in 1860, the impression prevailed throughout the Army and Navy that an officer's course of action would properly be guided by the action of his State. In the meantime

the superior man attended to his regimental duties, formulated measures for his own conduct, and carefully refrained from critical utterances against the honest convictions of his brother officers.

On 18 January, 1861, Stuart wrote his brother, William Alexander Stuart, a citizen of Saltville, Va.: "Events are transpiring so rapidly, that furnish us so little hope of perpetuating the Union, that I feel it incumbent upon me to tell you my course of conduct in such a contingency. Of course, I go with Virginia, whether she be alone, or otherwise." He was sure, he went on, that a large military force would be required for some time by the State, and he thought he might raise in Wythe County a legion (200 men) of cavalry, or a battery of light artillery, himself as commander. The influence of Governor Letcher, his kinsman, would doubtless be helpful, and he wanted his brother to be looking around for men and horses.

By that time five States had left the Union, and most of the regular officers, native to these States, had resigned and gone home. Stuart dealt with the matter in a paragraph, and proceeded to tell his brother about the temperance speech he made in Fort Wise, Christmas, "which gained me great eclat among the officers and soldiers—there are $\frac{1}{4}$ the command Sons of Temperance; they had a grand procession and ovation. I had only a few days' notice and spoke 20 minutes. . . ." All his life Stuart was a temperance man, and of that more hereafter.

His wife, the daughter of Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, was at Fort Riley with her father, and her two children with her, for the winter. In February Stuart applied for sixty days' leave and went down to join them, leaving Wise about 1 March. He wrote his brother: "At Fort Riley, . . . I will quietly

and calmly await the march of events." A few days later, from Fort Riley, he wrote: "The moment she [Virginia] passes the ordinance of secession, I will set out immediately for Richmond and report in person to Gov. Letcher, unless I am certain that my services would be more needed at some other point in the State." (In this sentence, the final word was written "South," but he scratched it out and made it "State.") "If no war ensue upon Virginia's secession, I will quit the army, and if I can obtain no desirable position in her regular army, I will resign and practice law in Memphis, Tennessee. I am a captain now, by the vacancies which have already occurred in the army, but I would rather be a private in Virginia's army than a general in any Army to Coerce her. . . . Colonel Cooke will, I think, become a Missourian, in the event of disruption, as he is perhaps more identified with that State than any other. . . ." He thought the Federal Government should "withdraw its troops on the secession of a State, so depriving that State of any further protection by the Federal Government, for which sole purpose the troops were stationed within her limits. . . ." And he concluded: "I am making very small calculations on my realizing anything out of my Captaincy, and I am looking forward with considerable certainty to resignation."

He was twenty-eight years old in the month just passed. He had entered West Point at the age of seventeen, in 1850, and he had no ambitions outside the profession of arms. In his six years of service he had done well; his colonel in his first regiment, the Mounted Rifles, had officially reported him as an officer of unusual promise. He had been one of the hand-picked lot posted to the 1st and 2d Cavalry regiments, which were formed by Jefferson Davis when he was

Secretary of War and officered by the élite of the army. A. S. Johnston and Sumner were their colonels; Joseph E. Johnston and Robert E. Lee their lieutenant-colonels. The majors were Emory, Sedgwick, Hardee, and Thomas; and McClellan, Hood, Kirby Smith, Sackett, Stoneman, Bayard, Fitzhugh Lee, and Lomax were among the company officers. Almost every officer in these regiments, from the second lieutenants up, rose to high command in the war. With the Southern officers leaving, those who remained in the service were certain of their future, of promotion, and of opportunity. And Stuart was married, his wife was the daughter of Colonel Cooke of the United States Dragoons, and he was dependent on his pay. It is not on record that he hesitated, when the time came for decision, or ever considered any action other than the one he took. He was on a leave status when the news of Virginia's secession reached Kansas. He mailed his resignation and took the road to Virginia, with Flora Stuart and his boy and girl. His establishment was not elaborate and he owned no slaves.

Travelling down the Missouri to St. Louis, the Stuarts found the city in an uproar, with Union sentiment distinctly on top. The Federal Government was accepting the resignations of Southern officers and allowing them to proceed at will, but in St. Louis and elsewhere through the border States unpleasant and effective restraints were being laid upon secessionists. Lieutenant Alexander, returning from San Francisco to Georgia, by way of steamer to New York, was obliged to take the cars to Kentucky, and cross that frontier. Cadet John Pelham, West Point '61, started for Alabama by the western route, and was obliged, in New Albany, Ind., to give out that he was a courier of General Scott's: that relieved him of immediate

arrest, but did not get him out of danger, and a pretty Union girl, who melted at his blond elegance, rowed him across the river from Jeffersonville to Kentucky under pretense of a boat ride. Otherwise, he thinks he would have been confined. Stuart spent several anxious days in St. Louis before he could get off, by boat and stage and rail, to the East. He had investments in St. Louis amounting to \$6,000, no small sum in that day, which he was forced to leave behind. It was a trouble to him, for there was always a certain Scotch thrift in his anxiety for the support of those dependent on him.

There accompanied him, from Riley, his wife's brother, Mr. John R. Cooke, Harvard '55, who elected to follow his brother-in-law out of the Union and who would become an able and respected brigadier of the Confederacy. He

fought through all the great Virginia battles and took five heavy wounds, and lived after Appomattox to raise a family in Richmond; and he would, after twenty years, become reconciled to his father in a meeting at the Willard Hotel in Washington. But Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, although he was born a Virginian, did not become a Missourian. He held with his dragoons, and was very soon a brigadier-general of United States cavalry. A little more than a year later Stuart's horsemen were snatching at his father-in-law's outposts, behind Fitz-John Porter's flanks on the Peninsula.

Commissioned major of infantry by Governor Letcher on 6 May, 1861, Stuart was ordered to Winchester, where General Joseph E. Johnston was whipping into shape the Confederate Army of the Shenandoah.

"The Ride Around McClellan," one of Stuart's most famous exploits, revealing his character and his spirit, the story of a great adventure, appears in the July SCRIBNER'S.



The Son

BY MARK VAN DOREN

FATHER, though his hand in yours
Be very warm and small
And pull you on to pleasant places,
Father, let it fall.

As often as it reaches up,
Wrap it round again.
Give all it takes; but when it loosens
Be you ready then.

Go not with it beyond the road,
Into the April field;
The fingers now that you defend
Will hold another shield,

A flawless mirror to the flowers;
But you will look, and only
See a common stalk standing
Blown upon and lonely.