

The Captain's Gray Horse

By ELLA F. MOSBY

WNUS Service

THERE is a strange tale of the night after a bloody conflict, when the horses of two opposing cavalry regiments, having been but carelessly picketed, broke loose, and in the uncertain light of the camp-fires again engaged in a fierce struggle. Screaming, biting, charging with desperate courage, they renewed the conflict of the day, not allowing themselves to be separated until more than half their number lay dead or disabled on the field. Whether this be true, or not, certain it is that the more intelligent cavalry horses learn to love the wild excitement and thrill of war, and even imitate somewhat of the spirit of the corps of their owners. My own mare, beautiful and spirited creature, I have often seen tingle from head to foot at the first bugle-note of "booms and saddles." It would have taken a strong hand to hold her back.

My story, however, is not of her, but of our captain's gray, a powerful and fiery horse, the finest in our regiment for speed, bottom, brain and pluck. Despite an imperturbably grave air, he was continually playing tricks, especially on the other horses.

The captain was a reserved and apparently a lonely man. His horse was, in fact, his only intimate friend, and when in the second year of the war the captain was killed—shot dead in his saddle while returning from a reconnaissance expedition—his gray followed him to the grave.

I succeeded as captain, and somehow it seemed natural that I should take care of the horse, though I never rode him. He went with his old company, however, just the same. If he were fastened anywhere when we were called to mount, he made such an awful row that I couldn't stand it. I ended by letting him go loose just as his master had done; he always came instantly at a certain whistle, and was perfectly obedient so long as you did not try to send him back. At every drill, on every march, he kept his old place, or as near it as possible. One night we were going through a tangled bit of timber, hardly daring to breathe, much less speak, when the gray threw up his head with a loud snort.

At once the whole wood was alive before us with men firing on every side. In another moment we should have been surrounded and retreat impossible. As it was, we barely cut our way out, the gray literally fighting by my side. A ghostly sort of light it was; the new moon just up, and in the glimmering light everything shadowy and confused, friends and foes, horses and riders.

"By G—, the last captain did us a good turn!" exclaimed one of the men when we were fairly beyond shot.

"The last captain! What do you mean?" I asked.

"Beg pardon, nothing sir. Only, hesitating, 'twas the captain's gray give that cry; we'd been in, head foremost, but for that!"

After that I had a curious feeling all through the action that, if I only turned quickly enough I should see a shadowy rider upon the shadowy gray, though, we were all shadows in the dusky, half-lit wood.

On Sunday morning—the third since the captain's death—the great battle began. The smoke hung thick over the field, the air was stifling with the smell of gunpowder, as at a thunder storm in a cheap theater. Slightly to our right was a hill from which the enemy poured hot and fast a rain of death. We were as yet protected by the woods, though a ghastly fringe of the dead lay without the shelter. All at once I saw a rider detach himself from a group still farther to our left, and ride at a gallop toward us. He rode straight to our colonel, saluted, said a few words, saluted again, and rode back, not perceptibly the faster because he was the living target for a hundred rifles.

Our colonel turned to us: "We must take those guns, boys. After we leave, these woods you cannot hear any orders, but there is no need. That's all. Take the guns!"

There was a whirr, a plunge, a dash forward. I remember my mare reared a wild sort of joy as she rushed on, and that the gray was abreast. We were in the midst of it instantly. There was a cry of "Close up ranks!" a scream, another cry, we closed up, and again and again wide rents were torn asunder as we went on, and again closed. Suddenly my own mare was down. I clutched at the floating mane of the gray that loomed above me, and was up again; but somebody else had drawn rein. The line wavered, was on the verge of wheeling in blind, hopeless panic before the face of death, when, all at once, the gray horse threw his head in air, uttered a loud, piercing neigh, like a fierce challenge, and dashed on with the fury of a whirlwind. The others followed with one mad impulse, in which I was borne irresistibly on, striking instinctively with my saber at every opposing figure, but hardly with conscious intentions; and the next moment I was over the low earthworks, among the guns. My comrades—all who were left—were close behind me, and the hill was ours!

It is said that this charge was the turning-point of the whole battle. I was promoted for bravery on the field, and for a while, at least, counted a hero. Yet, so far as any purpose of mine or any voluntary action was concerned, why, I knew no more than the dead! No more than the dead? Perhaps not so much.

How Indians Explain Formation of Canyon

An Indian legend says that the Grand canyon of Colorado was made single-handed by Pack-the-guy, who was armed with a large flint knife and a big stick. Once upon a time the world was covered so deep with water that nobody knew what to do until Pack-the-guy took the initiative. The knife he thrust deep into the heart of the earth, hammering until the canyon was formed, the Family Herald says. Another legend says that there was a great chief who mourned the death of his wife Tawwata. One of the Indian gods came to him and told him his wife was in a happier land and offered to take him there that he might see for himself if upon his return, he would cease to mourn. The great chief promised. Then Tawwata made a trail through the mountains. Then he rolled a stone into the gorge as broad and rapid that it would engulf any that might attempt to enter thereby.

How Race Has Advanced

Just when and where and how did the human race develop from some more or less ape-like ancestor? This is the most important of the questions which anthropologists are seeking to answer. Because most of the anthropoid apes of today are inhabitants of Africa, savants have held that Africa was the scene of man's emergence from darkness and the realm of brutes. Recent discoveries have tended to strengthen this assumption. Nevertheless there is reason in the argument of those who still hold that central Asia was "the cradle of the human race."

The plateau of Iran was long given the honor. Now, however, scientists are looking farther east and are casting very inquisitive eyes in the direction of the Desert of Gobi—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

How Characters Grow

Two of the most remarkable instances in fiction where a character has gradually gained his maker's respect and affection may be seen in Mr. Pickwick and Dick Swiveller; compare the unpromising first appearance of these men with their development. Dickens could not have imagined any such growth in grace when he conceived of these characters; they won his heart in spite of himself. Clyde Fitch used to say that he would begin a play with a perfectly definite idea of what his characters were to be and to do; and then the characters would insist on behaving in a totally different fashion and he was forced, in spite of himself, to obey and follow, rather than have his own way with them.—William Lyon Phelps in Scribner's.

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