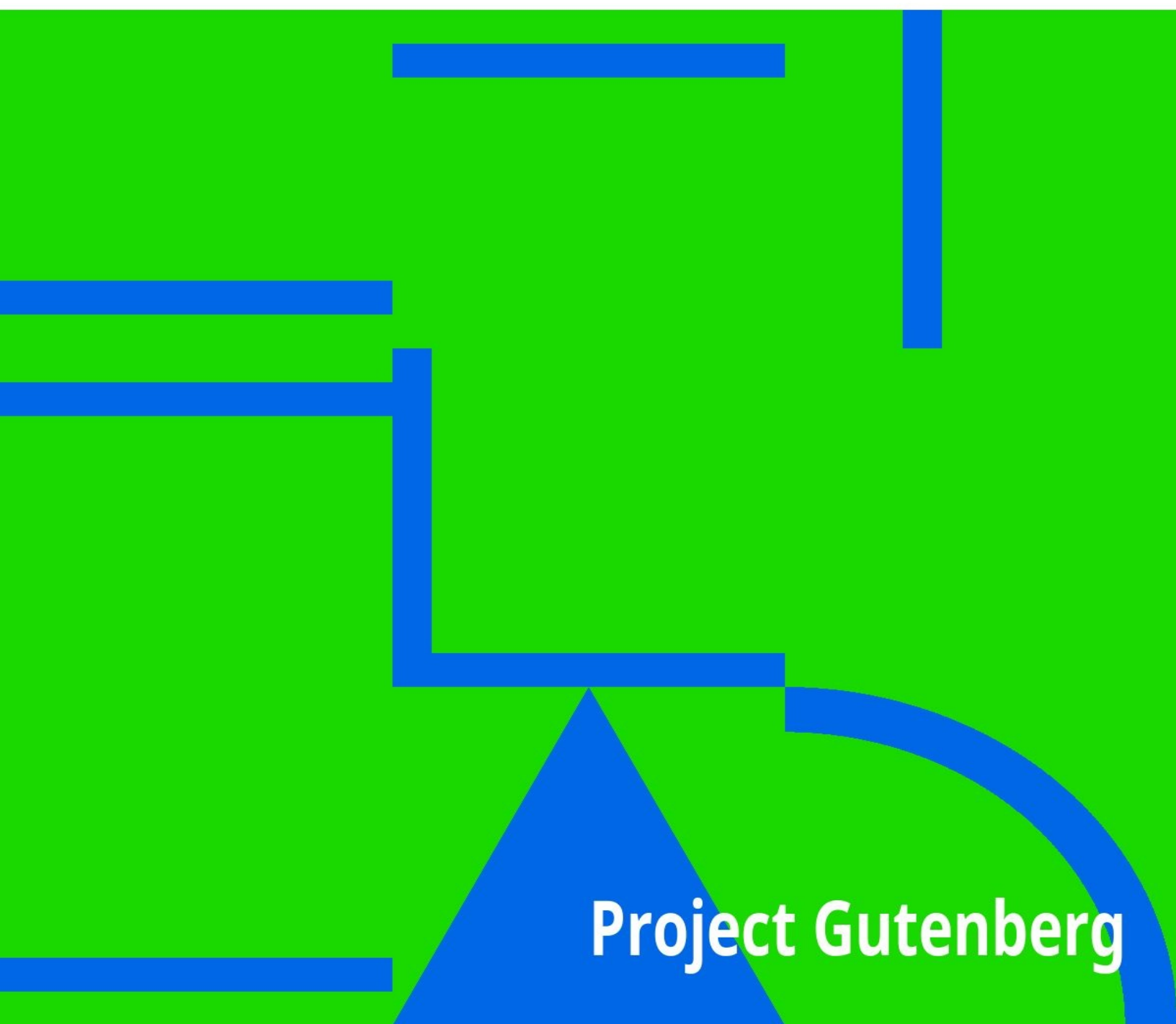


Rebel Raider

H. Beam Piper



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Rebel Raider

by H. Beam Piper

It was almost midnight, on January 2, 1863, and the impromptu party at the Ratcliffe home was breaking up. The guest of honor, General J. E. B. Stuart, felt that he was overstaying his welcome—not at the Ratcliffe home, where everybody was soundly Confederate, but in Fairfax County, then occupied by the Union Army.

About a week before, he had come raiding up from Culpepper with a strong force of cavalry, to spend a merry Christmas in northern Virginia and give the enemy a busy if somewhat less than happy New Year's. He had shot up outposts, run off horses from remount stations, plundered supply depots, burned stores of forage; now, before returning to the main Confederate Army, he had paused to visit his friend Laura Ratcliffe. And, of course, there had been a party. There was always a party when Jeb Stuart was in any one place long enough to organize one.

They were all crowding into the hallway—the officers of Stuart's staff, receiving their hats and cloaks from the servants and buckling on their weapons; the young ladies, their gay dresses showing only the first traces of wartime shabbiness; the matrons who chaperoned them; Stuart himself, the center of attention, with his hostess on his arm.

"It's a shame you can't stay longer, General," Laura Ratcliffe was saying. "It's hard on us, living in conquered territory, under enemy rule."

"Well, I won't desert you entirely, Miss Ratcliffe," Stuart told her. "I'm returning to Culpepper in the morning, as you know, but I mean to leave Captain Mosby behind with a few men, to look after the loyal Confederate people here until we can return in force and in victory."

Hearing his name, one of the men in gray turned, his hands raised to hook the fastening at the throat of his cloak. Just four days short of his thirtieth birthday,

he looked even more youthful; he was considerably below average height, and so slender as to give the impression of frailness. His hair and the beard he was wearing at the time were very light brown. He wore an officer's uniform without insignia of rank, and instead of a saber he carried a pair of 1860-model Colt .44's on his belt, with the butts to the front so that either revolver could be drawn with either hand, backhand or crossbody.

There was more than a touch of the dandy about him. The cloak he was fastening was lined with scarlet silk and the gray cock-brimmed hat the slave was holding for him was plumed with a squirrel tail. At first glance he seemed no more than one of the many young gentlemen of the planter class serving in the Confederate cavalry. But then one looked into his eyes and got the illusion of being covered by a pair of blued pistol muzzles. He had an aura of combined ruthlessness, self confidence, good humor and impudent audacity.

For an instant he stood looking inquiringly at the general. Then he realized what Stuart had said, and the blue eyes sparkled. This was the thing he had almost given up hoping for—an independent command and a chance to operate in the enemy's rear.



In 1855, John Singleton Mosby, newly graduated from the University of Virginia, had opened a law office at Bristol, Washington County, Virginia, and a year later he had married.

The son of a well-to-do farmer and slave-owner, his boyhood had been devoted to outdoor sports, especially hunting, and he was accounted an expert horseman and a dead shot, even in a society in which skill with guns and horses was taken for granted. Otherwise, the outbreak of the war had found him without military qualifications and completely uninterested in military matters. Moreover, he had been a rabid anti-secessionist.

It must be remembered, however, that, like most Southerners, he regarded secession as an entirely local issue, to be settled by the people of each state for themselves. He took no exception to the position that a state had the constitutional right to sever its connection with the Union if its people so desired. His objection to secession was based upon what he considered to be political logic. He realized that, once begun, secession was a process which

could only end in reducing America to a cluster of impotent petty sovereignties, torn by hostilities, incapable of any concerted action, a fair prey to any outside aggressor.

However, he was also a believer in the paramount sovereignty of the states. He was first of all a Virginian. So, when Virginia voted in favor of secession, Mosby, while he deplored the choice, felt that he had no alternative but to accept it. He promptly enlisted in a locally organized cavalry company, the Washington Mounted Rifles, under a former U. S. officer and West Point graduate, William E. Jones.

His letters to his wife told of his early military experiences—his pleasure at receiving one of the fine new Sharps carbines which Captain Jones had wangled for his company, and, later, a Colt .44 revolver: his first taste of fire in the Shenandoah Valley, where the company, now incorporated into Colonel Stuart's First Virginia Cavalry, were covering Johnston's march to re-enforce Beauregard: his rather passive participation in the big battle at Manassas. He was keenly disappointed at being held in reserve throughout the fighting. Long afterward, it was to be his expressed opinion that the Confederacy had lost the war by failing to follow the initial victory and exploit the rout of McDowell's army.

The remainder of 1861 saw him doing picket duty in Fairfax County. When Stuart was promoted to brigadier general, and Captain Jones took his place as colonel of the First Virginia, Mosby became the latter's adjutant. There should have been a commission along with this post, but this seems to have been snarled in red tape at Richmond and never came through. It was about this time that Mosby first came to Stuart's personal attention. Mosby spent a night at headquarters after escorting a couple of young ladies who had been living outside the Confederate lines and were anxious to reach relatives living farther south.

Stuart had been quite favorably impressed with Mosby, and when, some time later, the latter lost his place as adjutant of the First by reason of Jones' promotion to brigadier general and Fitzhugh Lee's taking over the regiment, Mosby became one of Stuart's headquarters scouts.

Scouting for Jeb Stuart was not the easiest work in the world, nor the safest, but Mosby appears to have enjoyed it, and certainly made good at it. It was he who scouted the route for Stuart's celebrated "Ride Around MacClellan" in June,

1862, an exploit which brought his name to the favorable attention of General Lee. By this time, still without commission, he was accepted at Stuart's headquarters as a sort of courtesy officer, and generally addressed as "Captain" Mosby. Stuart made several efforts to get him commissioned, but War Department red tape seems to have blocked all of them. By this time, too, Mosby had become convinced of the utter worthlessness of the saber as a cavalryman's weapon, and for his own armament adopted a pair of Colts.

The revolver of the Civil War was, of course, a percussion-cap weapon. Even with the powder and bullet contained in a combustible paper cartridge, loading such an arm was a slow process: each bullet had to be forced in the front of the chamber on top of its propellant charge by means of a hinged rammer under the barrel, and a tiny copper cap had to be placed on each nipple. It was nothing to attempt on a prancing horse. The Union cavalryman was armed with a single-shot carbine—the seven-shot Spencer repeater was not to make its battlefield appearance until late in 1863—and one revolver, giving him a total of seven shots without reloading. With a pair of six-shooters, Mosby had a five-shot advantage over any opponent he was likely to encounter. As he saw it, tactical strength lay in the number of shots which could be delivered without reloading, rather than in the number of men firing them. Once he reached a position of independent command, he was to adhere consistently to this principle.

On July 14, 1862, General John Pope, who had taken over a newly created Union Army made up of the commands of McDowell, Banks and Fremont, issued a bombastic and tactless order to his new command, making invidious comparisons between the armies in the west and those in the east. He said, "I hear constantly of 'taking strong positions and holding them,' of 'lines of retreat,' and of 'bases of supplies.' Let us discard all such ideas. Let us study the probable lines of retreat of our opponents, and leave our own to take care of themselves."

That intrigued Mosby. If General Pope wasn't going to take care of his own rear, somebody ought to do it for him, and who better than John Mosby? He went promptly to Stuart, pointing out Pope's disinterest in his own lines of supply and communication, and asked that he be given about twenty men and detailed to get into Pope's rear and see what sort of disturbance he could create.

Stuart doubted the propriety of sending men into what was then Stonewall Jackson's territory, but he gave Mosby a letter to Jackson, recommending the bearer highly and outlining what he proposed doing, with the request that he be given some men to try it. With this letter, Mosby set out for Jackson's

headquarters.

He never reached his destination. On the way, he was taken prisoner by a raiding force of New York cavalry, and arrived, instead, at Old Capitol jail in Washington. Stuart requested his exchange at once, and Mosby spent only about ten days in Old Capitol, and then was sent down the Potomac on an exchange boat, along with a number of other prisoners of war, for Hampton Roads.

The boat-load of prisoners, about to be exchanged and returned to their own army, were allowed to pass through a busy port of military embarkation and debarkation, with every opportunity to observe everything that was going on, and, to make a bad matter worse, the steamboat captain was himself a Confederate sympathizer. So when Mosby, from the exchange boat, observed a number of transports lying at anchor, he had no trouble at all in learning that they carried Burnside's men, newly brought north from the Carolinas. With the help of the steamboat captain, Mosby was able to learn that the transports were bound for Acquia Creek, on the Potomac; that meant that the re-enforcements were for Pope.



As soon as he was exchanged, Mosby made all haste for Lee's headquarters to report what he had discovered. Lee, remembering Mosby as the man who had scouted ahead of Stuart's Ride Around MacClellan, knew that he had a hot bit of information from a credible source. A dispatch rider was started off at once for Jackson, and Jackson struck Pope at Cedar Mountain before he could be re-enforced. Mosby returned to Stuart's headquarters, losing no time in promoting a pair of .44's to replace the ones lost when captured, and found his stock with Stuart at an all-time high as a result of his recent feat of espionage while in the hands of the enemy.

So he was with Stuart when Stuart stopped at Laura Ratcliffe's home, and was on hand when Stuart wanted to make one of his characteristic gestures of gallantry. And so he finally got his independent command—all of six men—and orders to operate in the enemy's rear.

Whatever Stuart might have had in mind in leaving him behind "to look after the loyal Confederate people," John Mosby had no intention of posting himself in Laura Ratcliffe's front yard as a guard of honor. He had a theory of guerrilla

warfare which he wanted to test. In part, it derived from his experiences in the Shenandoah Valley and in Fairfax County, but in larger part, it was based upon his own understanding of the fundamental nature of war.

The majority of guerrilla leaders have always been severely tactical in their thinking. That is to say, they have been concerned almost exclusively with immediate results. A troop column is ambushed, a picket post attacked, or a supply dump destroyed for the sake of the immediate loss of personnel or materiel so inflicted upon the enemy. Mosby, however, had a well-conceived strategic theory. He knew, in view of the magnitude of the war, that the tactical effects of his operations would simply be lost in the over-all picture. But, if he could create enough uproar in the Union rear, he believed that he could force the withdrawal from the front of a regiment or even a brigade to guard against his attacks and, in some future battle, the absence of that regiment or brigade might tip the scale of battle or, at least, make some future Confederate victory more complete or some defeat less crushing.

As soon as Stuart's column started southward, Mosby took his six men across Bull Run Mountain to Middleburg, where he ordered them to scatter out, billet themselves at outlying farms, and meet him at the Middleburg hotel on the night of January 10. Meanwhile he returned alone to Fairfax County, spending the next week making contacts with the people and gathering information.

On the night of Saturday, January 10, he took his men through the gap at Aldie and into Fairfax County. His first stop was at a farmhouse near Herndon Station, where he had friends, and there he met a woodsman, trapper and market hunter named John Underwood, who, with his two brothers, had been carrying on a private resistance movement against the Union occupation ever since the Confederate Army had moved out of the region. Overjoyed at the presence of regular Confederate troops, even as few as a half-dozen, Underwood offered to guide Mosby to a nearby Union picket post.

Capturing this post was no particularly spectacular feat of arms. Mosby's party dismounted about 200 yards away from it and crept up on it, to find seven members of the Fifth New York squatting around a fire, smoking, drinking coffee and trying to keep warm. Their first intimation of the presence of any enemy nearer than the Rappahannock River came when Mosby and his men sprang to their feet, leveled revolvers and demanded their surrender. One cavalryman made a grab for his carbine and Mosby shot him; the others put up their hands. The wounded man was given first aid, wrapped in a blanket and

placed beside the fire to wait until the post would be relieved. The others were mounted on their own horses and taken to Middleburg, where they were paroled i.e., released after they gave their word not to take up arms again against the Confederacy. This not entirely satisfactory handling of prisoners was the only means left open to Mosby with his small force, behind enemy lines.

The next night, Mosby stayed out of Fairfax County to allow the excitement to die down a little, but the night after, he and his men, accompanied by Underwood, raided a post where the Little River Turnpike crossed Cub Run. Then, after picking up a two-man road patrol en route, they raided another post near Fryingpan Church. This time they brought back fourteen prisoners and horses.

In all, he and his sextet had captured nineteen prisoners and twenty horses. But Mosby still wasn't satisfied. What he wanted was a few more men and orders to operate behind the Union army on a permanent basis. So, after paroling the catch of the night before, he told John Underwood to get busy gathering information and establishing contacts, and he took his six men back to Culpepper, reporting his activities to Stuart and claiming that under his existing orders he had not felt justified in staying away from the army longer. At the same time, he asked for a larger detail and orders to continue operating in northern Virginia.

In doing so, he knew he was taking a chance that Stuart would keep him at Culpepper, but as both armies had gone into winter quarters after Fredericksburg with only a minimum of outpost activity, he reasoned that Stuart would be willing to send him back. As it happened, Stuart was so delighted with the success of Mosby's brief activity that he gave him fifteen men, all from the First Virginia Cavalry, and orders to operate until recalled. On January 18, Mosby was back at Middleburg, ready to go to work in earnest.

As before, he scattered his men over the countryside, quartering them on the people. This time, before scattering them, he told them to meet him at Zion Church, just beyond the gap at Aldie, on the night of the 28th. During the intervening ten days, he was not only busy gathering information but also in an intensive recruiting campaign among the people of upper Fauquier and lower Loudoun Counties.



In this last, his best selling-point was a recent act of the Confederate States Congress called the Scott Partisan Ranger Law. This piece of legislation was, in effect, an extension of the principles of prize law and privateering to land warfare. It authorized the formation of independent cavalry companies, to be considered part of the armed forces of the Confederacy, their members to serve without pay and mount themselves, in return for which they were to be entitled to keep any spoil of war captured from the enemy. The terms "enemy" and "spoil of war" were defined so liberally as to cover almost anything not the property of the government or citizens of the Confederacy. There were provisions, also, entitling partisan companies to draw on the Confederate government for arms and ammunition and permitting them to turn in and receive payment for any spoil which they did not wish to keep for themselves.

The law had met with considerable opposition from the Confederate military authorities, who claimed that it would attract men and horses away from the regular service and into ineffective freebooting. There is no doubt that a number of independent companies organized under the Scott Law accomplished nothing of military value. Some degenerated into mere bandit gangs, full of deserters from both sides, and terrible only to the unfortunate Confederate citizens living within their range of operations. On the other hand, as Mosby was to demonstrate, a properly employed partisan company could be of considerable use.

It was the provision about booty, however, which appealed to Mosby. As he intended operating in the Union rear, where the richest plunder could be found, he hoped that the prospect would attract numerous recruits. The countryside contained many men capable of bearing arms who had remained at home to look after their farms but who would be more than willing to ride with him now and then in hope of securing a new horse for farm work, or some needed harness, or food and blankets for their families. The regular Mosby Men called them the "Conglomerates," and Mosby himself once said that they resembled the Democrat party, being "held together only by the cohesive power of public plunder."

Mosby's first operation with his new force was in the pattern of the other two—the stealthy dismounted approach and sudden surprise of an isolated picket post. He brought back eleven prisoners and twelve horses and sets of small arms, and, as on the night of the 10th, left one wounded enemy behind. As on the previous occasions, the prisoners were taken as far as Middleburg before being released on parole.

For this reason, Mosby was sure that Colonel Sir Percy Wyndham, commander of the brigade which included the Fifth New York, Eighteenth Pennsylvania and the First Vermont, would assume that this village was the raiders' headquarters. Colonel Wyndham, a European-trained soldier, would scarcely conceive of any military force, however small, without a regular headquarters and a fixed camp. Therefore, Wyndham would come looking for him at Middleburg. So, with a companion named Fountain Beattie, Mosby put up for what remained of the night at the home of a Mr. Lorman Chancellor, on the road from Aldie a few miles east of Middleburg. The rest of the company were ordered to stay outside Middleburg.

Mosby's estimate of his opponent was uncannily accurate. The next morning, about daybreak, he and Beattie were wakened by one of the Chancellor servants and warned that a large body of Union cavalry was approaching up the road from Aldie. Peering through the window shutters, they watched about 200 men of the Fifth New York ride by, with Colonel Wyndham himself in the lead. As soon as they were out of sight up the road, Mosby and Beattie, who had hastily dressed, dashed downstairs for their horses.

"I'm going to keep an eye on these people," Mosby told Beattie. "Gather up as many men as you can, and meet me in about half an hour on the hill above Middleburg. But hurry! I'd rather have five men now than a hundred by noon."

When Beattie with six men rejoined Mosby, he found the latter sitting on a stump, munching an apple and watching the enemy through his field glasses. Wyndham, who had been searching Middleburg for "Mosby's headquarters," was just forming his men for a push on to Upperville, where he had been assured by the canny Middleburgers that Mosby had his camp.

Mosby and his men cantered down the hillside to the road as Wyndham's force moved out of the village and then broke into a mad gallop to overtake them.



It was always hard to be sure whether jackets were dirty gray or faded blue. As the Union soldier had a not unfounded belief that the Virginia woods were swarming with bushwhackers (Confederate guerillas), the haste of a few men left behind to rejoin the column was quite understandable. The rearguard pulled up and waited for them. Then, at about twenty yards' range, one of the New

Yorkers, a sergeant, realized what was happening and shouted a warning:

"They're Rebs!"

Instantly one of Mosby's men, Ned Hurst, shot him dead. Other revolvers, ready drawn, banged, and several Union cavalrymen were wounded. Mosby and his followers hastily snatched the bridles of three others, disarmed them and turned, galloping away with them.

By this time, the main column, which had not halted with the rearguard, was four or five hundred yards away. There was a brief uproar, a shouting of contradictory orders, and then the whole column turned and came back at a gallop. Mosby, four of his men, and the three prisoners, got away, but Beattie and two others were captured when their horses fell on a sheet of ice treacherously hidden under the snow. There was no possibility of rescuing them. After the capture of Beattie and his companions, the pursuit stopped. Halting at a distance, Mosby saw Wyndham form his force into a compact body and move off toward Aldie at a brisk trot. He sent off the prisoners under guard of two of his men and followed Wyndham's retreat almost to Aldie without opportunity to inflict any more damage.

During his stop at Middleburg, Wyndham had heaped coals on a growing opposition to Mosby, fostered by pro-Unionists in the neighborhood. Wyndham informed the townspeople that he would burn the town and imprison the citizens if Mosby continued the attacks on his outposts. A group of citizens, taking the threat to heart, petitioned Stuart to recall Mosby, but the general sent a stinging rebuke, telling the Middleburgers that Mosby and his men were risking their lives which were worth considerably more than a few houses and barns.

Mosby was also worried about the antipathy to the Scott Law and the partisan ranger system which was growing among some of the general officers of the Confederacy. To counteract such opposition, he needed to achieve some spectacular feat of arms which would capture the popular imagination, make a public hero of himself, and place him above criticism.



And all the while, his force was growing. The booty from his raids excited the cupidity of the more venturesome farmers, and they were exchanging the hoe for the revolver and joining him. A number of the convalescents and furloughed

soldiers were arranging transfers to his command. Others, with no permanent military attachment, were drifting to Middleburg, Upperville, or Rectortown, inquiring where they might find Mosby, and making their way to join him.

There was a young Irishman, Dick Moran. There was a Fauquier County blacksmith, Billy Hibbs, who reported armed with a huge broadsword which had been the last product of his forge. There were Walter Frankland, Joe Nelson, Frank Williams and George Whitescarver, among the first to join on a permanent basis. And, one day, there was the strangest recruit of all.

A meeting was held on the 25th of February at the Blackwell farm, near Upperville, and Mosby and most of his men were in the kitchen of the farmhouse, going over a map of the section they intended raiding, when a couple of men who had been on guard outside entered, pushing a Union cavalry sergeant ahead of them.

"This Yankee says he wants to see you, Captain," one of the men announced. "He came on foot; says his horse broke a leg and had to be shot."

"Well, I'm Mosby," the guerrilla leader said. "What do you want?"

The man in blue came to attention and saluted.

"I've come here to join your company, sir," he said calmly.

There was an excited outburst from the men in the kitchen, but Mosby took the announcement in stride.

"And what's your name and unit, sergeant?"

"James F. Ames: late Fifth New York Cavalry, sir."

After further conversation, Mosby decided that the big Yankee was sincere in his avowed decision to join the forces of the Confederacy. He had some doubts about his alleged motives: the man was animated with a most vindictive hatred of the Union government, all his former officers and most of his former comrades. No one ever learned what injury, real or fancied, had driven Sergeant Ames to desertion and treason, but in a few minutes Mosby was sure that the man was through with the Union Army.

Everybody else was equally sure that he was a spy, probably sent over by Wyndham to assassinate Mosby. Eventually Mosby proposed a test of Ames'

sincerity. The deserter should guide the company to a Union picket post, and should accompany the raiders unarmed: Mosby would ride behind him, ready to shoot him at the first sign of treachery. The others agreed to judge the new recruit by his conduct on the raid. A fairly strong post, at a schoolhouse at Thompson's Corners, was selected as the objective, and they set out, sixteen men beside Ames and Mosby, through a storm of rain and sleet. Stopping at a nearby farm, Mosby learned that the post had been heavily re-enforced since he had last raided it. There were now about a hundred men at the schoolhouse.

Pleased at this evidence that his campaign to force the enemy to increase his guard was bearing fruit, Mosby decided to abandon his customary tactics of dismounting at a distance and approaching on foot. On a night like this, the enemy would not be expecting him, so the raiders advanced boldly along the road, Mosby telling Ames to make whatever answer he thought would be believed in case they were challenged. However, a couple of trigger-happy vedettes let off their carbines at them, yelled, "The Rebs are coming!" and galloped for the schoolhouse.

There was nothing to do but gallop after them, and Mosby and his band came pelting in on the heels of the vedettes. Hitherto, his raids had been more or less bloodless, but this time he had a fight on his hands, and if the men in the schoolhouse had stayed inside and defended themselves with carbine fire, they would have driven off the attack. Instead, however, they rushed outside, each man trying to mount his horse. A lieutenant and seven men were killed, about twice that number wounded, and five prisoners were taken. The rest, believing themselves attacked by about twice their own strength, scattered into the woods and got away.

Ames, who had ridden unarmed, flung himself upon a Union cavalryman at the first collision and disarmed him, then threw himself into the fight with the captured saber. His conduct during the brief battle at the schoolhouse was such as to remove from everybody's mind the suspicion that his conversion to the Confederate cause was anything but genuine. Thereafter, he was accepted as a Mosby man.

He was accepted by Mosby himself as a veritable godsend, since he was acquainted with the location of every Union force in Fairfax County, and knew of a corridor by which it would be possible to penetrate Wyndham's entire system of cavalry posts as far as Fairfax Courthouse itself. Here, then, was the making of the spectacular coup which Mosby needed to answer his critics and

enemies, both at Middleburg and at army headquarters. He decided to attempt nothing less than a raid upon Fairfax Courthouse, with the capture of Wyndham as its purpose.

This last would entail something of a sacrifice, for he had come to esteem Sir Percy highly as an opponent whose mind was an open book and whose every move could be predicted in advance. With Wyndham eliminated, he would have to go to the trouble of learning the mental processes of his successor.

However, Wyndham would be the ideal captive to grace a Mosby triumph, and a successful raid on Fairfax Courthouse, garrisoned as it was by between five and ten thousand Union troops, would not only secure Mosby's position in his own army but would start just the sort of a panic which would result in demands that the Union rear be re-enforced at the expense of the front.

So, on Sunday, March 8, Mosby led thirty-nine men through the gap at Aldie, the largest force that had followed him to date. It was the sort of a foul night that he liked for raiding, with a drizzling rain falling upon melting snow. It was pitch dark before they found the road between Centreville and Fairfax, along which a telegraph line had been strung to connect the main cavalry camp with General Stoughton's headquarters. Mosby sent one of his men, Harry Hatcher, up a pole to cut the wire. They cut another telegraph line at Fairfax Station and left the road, moving through the woods toward Fairfax Courthouse. At this time, only Mosby and Yank Ames knew the purpose of the expedition.

It was therefore with surprise and some consternation that the others realized where they were as they rode into the courthouse square and halted. A buzz of excited whispers rose from the men.

"That's right," Mosby assured them calmly. "We're in Fairfax Courthouse, right in the middle of ten thousand Yankees, but don't let that worry you. All but about a dozen of them are asleep. Now, if you all keep your heads and do what you're told, we'll be as safe as though we were in Jeff Davis' front parlor."

He then began giving instructions, detailing parties to round up horses and capture any soldiers they found awake and moving about. He went, himself, with several men, to the home of a citizen named Murray, where he had been told that Wyndham had quartered himself, but here he received the disappointing news that the Englishman had gone to Washington that afternoon.

A few minutes later, however, Joe Nelson came up with a prisoner, an

infantryman who had just been relieved from sentry duty at General Stoughton's headquarters, who said that there had been a party there earlier in the evening and that Stoughton and several other officers were still there. Mosby, still disappointed at his failure to secure Wyndham, decided to accept Stoughton in his place. Taking several men, he went at once to the house where the prisoner said Stoughton had his headquarters.



Arriving there, he hammered loudly on the door with a revolver butt. An upstairs window opened, and a head, in a nightcap, was thrust out.

"What the devil's all the noise about?" its owner demanded. "Don't you know this is General Stoughton's headquarters?"

"I'd hoped it was; I almost killed a horse getting here," Mosby retorted. "Come down and open up; dispatches from Washington."

In a few moments, a light appeared inside on the first floor, and the door opened. A man in a nightshirt, holding a candle, stood in the doorway.

"I'm Lieutenant Prentiss, on General Stoughton's staff. The general's asleep. If you'll give me the dispatches ..."

Mosby caught the man by the throat with his left hand and shoved a Colt into his face with his right. Dan Thomas, beside him, lifted the candle out of the other man's hand.

"And I'm Captain Mosby, General Stuart's staff. We've just taken Fairfax Courthouse. Inside, now, and take me to the general at once."

The general was in bed, lying on his face in a tangle of bedclothes. Mosby pulled the sheets off of him, lifted the tail of his nightshirt and slapped him across the bare rump.

The effect was electric. Stoughton sat up in bed, gobbling in fury. In the dim candlelight, he mistook the gray of Mosby's tunic for blue, and began a string of bloodthirsty threats of court-martial and firing squad, interspersed with oaths.

"Easy, now, General," the perpetrator of the outrage soothed. "You've heard of John Mosby, haven't you?"

"Yes; have you captured him?" In the face of such tidings, Stoughton would gladly forget the assault on his person.

Mosby shook his head, smiling seraphically. "No, General. He's captured you. I'm Mosby."

"Oh my God!" Stoughton sank back on the pillow and closed his eyes, overcome.

Knowing the precarious nature of his present advantage, Mosby then undertook to deprive Stoughton of any hope of rescue or will to resist.

"Stuart's cavalry is occupying Fairfax Courthouse," he invented, "and Stonewall Jackson's at Chantilly with his whole force. We're all moving to occupy Alexandria by morning. You'll have to hurry and dress, General."

"Is Fitzhugh Lee here?" Stoughton asked. "He's a friend of mine; we were classmates at West Point."

"Why, no; he's with Jackson at Chantilly. Do you want me to take you to him? I can do so easily if you hurry."

It does not appear that Stoughton doubted as much as one syllable of this remarkable set of prevarications. The Union Army had learned by bitter experience that Stonewall Jackson was capable of materializing almost anywhere. So he climbed out of bed, putting on his clothes.



On the way back to the courthouse square, Prentiss got away from them in the darkness, but Mosby kept a tight hold on Stoughton's bridle. By this time, the suspicion that all was not well in the county seat had begun to filter about. Men were beginning to turn out under arms all over town, and there was a confusion of challenges and replies and some occasional firing as hastily wakened soldiers mistook one another for the enemy. Mosby got his prisoners and horses together and started out of town as quickly as he could.

The withdrawal was made over much the same route as the approach, without serious incident. Thanks to the precaution of cutting the telegraph wires, the camp at Centreville knew nothing of what had happened at Fairfax Courthouse until long after the raiders were safely away. They lost all but thirty of the

prisoners—in the woods outside Fairfax Courthouse, they escaped in droves—but they brought Stoughton and the two captains out safely.

The results were everything Mosby had hoped. He became a Confederate hero over night, and there was no longer any danger of his being recalled. There were several half-hearted attempts to kick him upstairs—an offer of a commission in the now defunct Virginia Provisional Army, which he rejected scornfully, and a similar offer in the regular Confederate States Army, which he politely declined because it would deprive his men of their right to booty under the Scott Law. Finally he was given a majority in the Confederate States Army, with authorization to organize a partisan battalion under the Scott Law. This he accepted, becoming Major Mosby of the Forty-Third Virginia Partisan Ranger Battalion.

The effect upon the enemy was no less satisfactory. When full particulars of the Fairfax raid reached Washington, Wyndham vanished from the picture, being assigned to other duties where less depended upon him. There was a whole epidemic of courts-martial and inquiries, some of which were still smouldering when the war ended. And Stoughton, the principal victim, found scant sympathy. President Lincoln, when told that the rebels had raided Fairfax to the tune of one general, two captains, thirty men and fifty-eight horses, remarked that he could make all the generals he wanted, but that he was sorry to lose the horses, as he couldn't make horses. As yet, there was no visible re-enforcement of the cavalry in Fairfax County from the front, but the line of picket posts was noticeably shortened.

About two weeks later, with forty men, Mosby raided a post at Herndon Station, bringing off a major, a captain, two lieutenants and twenty-one men, with a horse apiece. A week later, with fifty-odd men, he cut up about three times his strength of Union cavalry at Chantilly. Having surprised a small party, he had driven them into a much larger force, and the hunted had turned to hunt the hunters. Fighting a delaying action with a few men while the bulk of his force fell back on an old roadblock of felled trees dating from the second Manassas campaign, he held off the enemy until he was sure his ambush was set, then, by feigning headlong flight, led them into a trap and chased the survivors for five or six miles. Wyndham and Stoughton had found Mosby an annoying nuisance; their successors were finding him a serious menace.

This attitude was not confined to the local level, but extended all the way to the top echelons. The word passed down, "Get Mosby!" and it was understood that

the officer responsible for his elimination would find his military career made for him. One of the Union officers who saw visions of rapid advancement over the wreckage of Mosby's Rangers was a captain of the First Vermont, Josiah Flint by name. He was soon to have a chance at it.

On March 31, Mosby's Rangers met at Middleburg and moved across the mountain to Chantilly, expecting to take a strong outpost which had been located there. On arriving, they found the campsite deserted. The post had been pulled back closer to Fairfax after the fight of four days before. Mosby decided to move up to the Potomac and attack a Union force on the other side of Dranesville—Captain Josiah Flint's Vermonters.

They passed the night at John Miskel's farm, near Chantilly. The following morning, April 1, at about daybreak, Mosby was wakened by one of his men who had been sleeping in the barn. This man, having gone outside, had observed a small party of Union troops on the Maryland side of the river who were making semaphore signals to somebody on the Virginia side. Mosby ordered everybody to turn out as quickly as possible and went out to watch the signalmen with his field glasses. While he was watching, Dick Moran, a Mosby man who had billeted with friends down the road, arrived at a breakneck gallop from across the fields, shouting: "Mount your horses! The Yankees are coming!"

It appeared that he had been wakened, shortly before, by the noise of a column of cavalry on the road in front of the house where he had been sleeping, and had seen a strong force of Union cavalry on the march in the direction of Broad Run and the Miskel farm. Waiting until they had passed, he had gotten his horse and circled at a gallop through the woods, reaching the farm just ahead of them. It later developed that a woman of the neighborhood, whose head had been turned by the attentions of Union officers, had betrayed Mosby to Flint.

The Miskel farmhouse stood on the crest of a low hill, facing the river. Behind it stood the big barn, with a large barnyard enclosed by a high pole fence. As this was a horse farm, all the fences were eight feet high and quite strongly built. A lane ran down the slope of the hill between two such fences, and at the southern end of the slope another fence separated the meadows from a belt of woods, beyond which was the road from Dranesville, along which Flint's column was advancing.



It was a nasty spot for Mosby. He had between fifty and sixty men, newly roused from sleep, their horses unsaddled, and he was penned in by strong fences which would have to be breached if he were to escape. His only hope lay in a prompt counterattack. The men who had come out of the house and barn were frantically saddling horses, without much attention to whose saddle went on whose mount. Harry Hatcher, who had gotten his horse saddled, gave it to Mosby and appropriated somebody else's mount.

As Flint, at the head of his cavalry, emerged from the woods, Mosby had about twenty of his men mounted and was ready to receive him. The Union cavalry paused, somebody pulled out the gate bars at the foot of the lane, and the whole force started up toward the farm. Having opened the barnyard end of the lane, Mosby waited until Flint had come about halfway, then gave him a blast of revolver fire and followed this with a headlong charge down the lane. Flint was killed at the first salvo, as were several of the men behind him. By the time Mosby's charge rammed into the head of the Union attack, the narrow lane was blocked with riderless horses, preventing each force from coming to grips with the other. Here Mosby's insistence upon at least two revolvers for each man paid off, as did the target practice upon which he was always willing to expend precious ammunition. The Union column, constricted by the fences on either side of the lane and shaken by the death of their leader and by the savage attack of men whom they had believed hopelessly trapped, turned and tried to retreat, but when they reached the foot of the lane it was discovered that some fool, probably meaning to deny Mosby an avenue of escape, had replaced the gatebars. By this time, the rest of Mosby's force had mounted their horses, breaches had been torn in the fence at either side of the lane, and there were Confederates in both meadows, firing into the trapped men. Until the gate at the lower end gave way under the weight of horses crowded against it, there was a bloody slaughter. Within a few minutes Flint and nine of his men were killed, some fifteen more were given disabling wounds, eighty-two prisoners were taken, and over a hundred horses and large quantities of arms and ammunition were captured. The remains of Flint's force was chased as far as Dranesville. Mosby was still getting the prisoners sorted out, rounding up loose horses, gathering weapons and ammunition from casualties, and giving the wounded first aid, when a Union lieutenant rode up under a flag of truce, followed by several enlisted men and two civilians of the Sanitary Commission, the Civil War equivalent of the Red Cross, to pick up the wounded and bury the dead. This officer offered to care for Mosby's wounded with his own, an offer which was declined with thanks. Mosby said he would carry his casualties with him,

and the Union officer could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw only three wounded men on horse litters and one dead man tied to his saddle.

The sutlers at Dranesville had heard the firing and were about to move away when Mosby's column appeared. Seeing the preponderance of blue uniforms, they mistook the victors for prisoners and, anticipating a lively and profitable business, unpacked their loads and set up their counters. The business was lively, but anything but profitable. The Mosby men looted them unmercifully, taking their money, their horses, and everything else they had.



All through the spring of 1863, Mosby kept jabbing at Union lines of communication in northern Virginia. In June, his majority came through, and with it authority to organize a battalion under the Scott Law. From that time on, he was on his own, and there was no longer any danger of his being recalled to the regular Army. He was responsible only to Jeb Stuart until the general's death at Yellow Tavern a year later; thereafter, he took orders from no source below General Lee and the Secretary of War.

Even before this regularization of status, Mosby's force was beginning to look like a regular outfit. From the fifteen men he had brought up from Culpepper in mid-January, its effective and dependable strength had grown to about sixty riders, augmented from raid to raid by the "Conglomerate" fringe, who were now accepted as guerrillas-pro-tem without too much enthusiasm. A new type of recruit had begun to appear, the man who came to enlist on a permanent basis. Some were Maryland secessionists, like James Williamson, who, after the war, wrote an authoritative and well-documented history of the organization, Mosby's Rangers. Some were boys like John Edmonds and John Munson, who had come of something approaching military age since the outbreak of the war. Some were men who had wangled transfers from other Confederate units. Not infrequently these men had given up commissions in the regular army to enlist as privates with Mosby. For example, there was the former clergyman, Sam Chapman, who had been a captain of artillery, or the Prussian uhlan lieutenant, Baron Robert von Massow, who gave up a captaincy on Stuart's staff, or the Englishman, Captain Hoskins, who was shortly to lose his life because of his preference for the saber over the revolver, or Captain Bill Kennon, late of Wheat's Louisiana Tigers, who had also served with Walker in Nicaragua. As a general thing, the new Mosby recruit was a man of high intelligence, reckless bravery and ultra-

rugged individualism.

For his home territory, Mosby now chose a rough quadrangle between the Blue Ridge and Bull Run Mountain, bounded at its four corners by Snicker's Gap and Manassas Gap along the former and Thoroughfare Gap and Aldie Gap along the latter. Here, when not in action, the Mosby men billeted themselves, keeping widely dispersed, and an elaborate system, involving most of the inhabitants, free or slave, was set up to transmit messages, orders and warnings. In time this district came to be known as "Mosby's Confederacy," and, in the absence of any effective Confederate States civil authority, Mosby became the lawgiver and chief magistrate as well as military commander. John Munson, who also wrote a book of reminiscences after the war, said that Mosby's Confederacy was an absolute monarchy, and that none was ever better governed in history.

Adhering to his belief in the paramount importance of firepower, Mosby saw to it that none of his men carried fewer than two revolvers, and the great majority carried four, one pair on the belt and another on the saddle. Some extremists even carried a third pair down their boot-tops, giving them thirty-six shots without reloading. Nor did he underestimate the power of mobility. Each man had his string of horses, kept where they could be picked up at need. Unlike the regular cavalryman with his one mount, a Mosby man had only to drop an exhausted animal at one of these private remount stations and change his saddle to a fresh one. As a result of these two practices, Union combat reports throughout the war consistently credited Mosby with from three to five times his actual strength.

In time, the entire economy of Mosby's Confederacy came to be geared to Mosby's operations, just as the inhabitants of seventeenth century Tortugas or Port Royal depended for their livelihood on the loot of the buccaneers. The Mosby man who lived with some farmer's family paid for his lodging with gifts of foodstuffs and blankets looted from the enemy. There was always a brisk trade in captured U. S. Army horses and mules. And there was a steady flow of United States currency into the section, so that in time Confederate money was driven out of circulation in a sort of reversal of Gresham's law. Every prisoner taken reasonably close to Army pay day could be counted on for a few dollars, and in each company there would be some lucky or skillful gambler who would have a fairly sizeable roll of greenbacks. And, of course, there was the sutler, the real prize catch; any Mosby man would pass up a general in order to capture a sutler.

And Northern-manufactured goods filtered south by the wagonload. Many of the Mosby men wore Confederate uniforms that had been tailored for them in Baltimore and even in Washington and run through the Union lines.

By mid-June, Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania had begun and the countryside along Bull Run Mountain and the Blue Ridge exploded into a series of cavalry actions as the Confederate Army moved north along the Union right. Mosby kept his little force out of the main fighting, hacking away at the Union troops from behind and confusing their combat intelligence with reports of Rebel cavalry appearing where none ought to be. In the midst of this work, he took time out to dash across into Fairfax County with sixty men, shooting up a wagon train, burning wagons, and carrying off prisoners and mules, the latter being turned over to haul Lee's invasion transport. After the two armies had passed over the Potomac, he gathered his force and launched an invasion of Pennsylvania on his own, getting as far as Mercersburg and bringing home a drove of over 200 beef cattle.

He got back to Mosby's Confederacy in time to learn of Lee's defeat at Gettysburg. Realizing that Lee's retreat would be followed by a pursuing Union army, he began making preparations to withstand the coming deluge. For one thing, he decided to do something he had not done before—concentrate his force in a single camp on the top of Bull Run Mountain. In the days while Lee's army was trudging southward, Mosby gathered every horse and mule and cow he could find and drove them into the mountains, putting boys and slaves to work herding them. He commandeered wagons, and hauled grain and hay to his temporary camp. His men erected huts, and built corrals for horses and a stockade for prisoners. They even moved a blacksmith shop to the hidden camp. Then Mosby sat down and waited.

A few days later, Meade's army began coming through. The Forty-Third Partisan Ranger Battalion went to work immediately. For two weeks, they galloped in and out among the Union columns, returning to their hidden camp only long enough to change horses and leave the prisoners they had taken. They cut into wagon trains, scattering cavalry escorts, burning wagons, destroying supplies, blowing up ammunition, disabling cannon, running off mules. They ambushed marching infantry, flitting away before their victims had recovered from the initial surprise. Sometimes, fleeing from the scene of one attack, they would burst through a column on another road, leaving confusion behind to delay the pursuit.

Finally, the invaders passed on, the camp on the mountain top was abandoned, the Mosby men went back to their old billets, and the Forty-Third Battalion could take it easy again. That is to say, they only made a raid every couple of days and seldom fought a pitched battle more than once a week.

The summer passed; the Virginia hills turned from green to red and from red to brown. Mosby was severely wounded in the side and thigh during a fight at Gooding's Tavern on August 23, when two of his men were killed, but the raiders brought off eighty-five horses and twelve prisoners and left six enemy dead behind. The old days of bloodless sneak raids on isolated picket posts were past, now that they had enough men for two companies and Mosby rarely took the field with fewer than a hundred riders behind him.

Back in the saddle again after recovering from his wounds, Mosby devoted more attention to attacking the Orange and Alexandria and the Manassas Gap railroads and to harassing attacks for the rest of the winter.

In January, 1864, Major Cole, of the Union Maryland cavalry, began going out of his way to collide with the Forty-Third Virginia, the more so since he had secured the services of a deserter from Mosby, a man named Binns who had been expelled from the Rangers for some piece of rascality and was thirsting for revenge. Cole hoped to capitalize on Binns' defection as Mosby had upon the desertion of Sergeant Ames, and he made several raids into Mosby's Confederacy, taking a number of prisoners before the Mosby men learned the facts of the situation and everybody found a new lodging place.

On the morning of February 20, Mosby was having breakfast at a farmhouse near Piedmont Depot, on the Manassas Gap Railroad, along with John Munson and John Edmonds, the 'teen-age terrors, and a gunsmith named Jake Lavender, who was the battalion ordnance sergeant and engaged to young Edmonds' sister. Edmonds had with him a couple of Sharps carbines he had repaired for other members of the battalion and was carrying to return to the owners. Suddenly John Edmonds' younger brother, Jimmy, burst into the room with the news that several hundred Union cavalrymen were approaching. Lavender grabbed the two carbines, for which he had a quantity of ammunition, and they all ran outside.

Sending the younger Edmonds boy to bring re-enforcements, Mosby, accompanied by John Edmonds, Munson, and Jake Lavender, started to follow the enemy. He and Munson each took one of Lavender's carbines and opened fire on them, Munson killing a horse and Mosby a man. That started things off

properly. Cole's Marylanders turned and gave chase, and Mosby led them toward the rendezvous with Jimmy Edmonds and the re-enforcements. Everybody arrived together, Mosby's party, the pursuers, and the re-enforcements, and a running fight ensued, with Cole's men running ahead. This mounted chase, in the best horse-opera manner, came thundering down a road past a schoolhouse just as the pupils were being let out for recess. One of these, a 14-year-old boy named Cabell Maddox, jumped onto the pony on which he had ridden to school and joined in the pursuit, armed only with a McGuffey's Third Reader. Overtaking a fleeing Yank, he aimed the book at him and demanded his surrender; before the flustered soldier realized that his captor was unarmed, the boy had snatched the Colt from his belt and was covering him in earnest. This marked the suspension, for the duration of hostilities, of young Maddox's formal education. From that hour on he was a Mosby man, and he served with distinction to the end of the war.



The chase broke off, finally, when the pursuers halted to get their prisoners and captured horses together. Then they discovered that one of their number, a man named Cobb, had been killed. Putting the dead man across his saddle, they carried the body back to Piedmont, and the next day assembled there for the funeral. The services had not yet started, and Mosby was finishing writing a report to Stuart on the previous day's action, when a scout came pelting in to report Union cavalry in the vicinity of Middleburg.

Leaving the funeral in the hands of the preacher and the civilian mourners, Mosby and the 150 men who had assembled mounted and started off. Sam Chapman, the ex-artillery captain, who had worked up from the ranks to a lieutenancy with Mosby, was left in charge of the main force, while Mosby and a small party galloped ahead to reconnoiter. The enemy, they discovered, were not Cole's men but a California battalion. They learned that this force had turned in the direction of Leesburg, and that they were accompanied by the deserter, Binns.

Mosby made up his mind to ambush the Californians on their way back to their camp at Vienna. He had plans, involving a length of rope, for his former trooper, Binns. The next morning, having crossed Bull Run Mountain the night before, he took up a position near Dranesville, with scouts out to the west. When the enemy were finally reported approaching, he was ready for them. Twenty of his

150, with carbines and rifles, were dismounted and placed in the center, under Lieutenant Mountjoy. The rest of the force was divided into two equal sections, under Chapman and Frank Williams, and kept mounted on the flanks. Mosby himself took his place with Williams on the right. While they waited, they could hear the faint boom of cannon from Washington, firing salutes in honor of Washington's Birthday.

A couple of men, posted in advance, acted as decoys, and the Union cavalry, returning empty-handed from their raid, started after them in hopes of bringing home at least something to show for their efforts. Before they knew it, they were within range of Mountjoy's concealed riflemen. While they were still in disorder from the surprise volley, the two mounted sections swept in on them in a blaze of revolver fire, and they broke and fled. There was a nasty jam in a section of fenced road, with mounted Mosby men in the woods on either side and Mountjoy's rifles behind them. Before they could get clear of this, they lost fifteen killed, fifteen more wounded, and over seventy prisoners, and the victorious Mosby men brought home over a hundred captured horses and large quantities of arms and ammunition. To their deep regret, however, Binns was not to be found either among the casualties or the prisoners. As soon as he had seen how the fight was going, the deserter had spurred off northward, never to appear in Virginia again. Mosby's own loss had been one man killed and four wounded.



For the rest of the spring, operations were routine—attacks on wagon trains and train wrecking and bridge burning on the railroads. With the cut-and-try shifting of command of the Union Army of the Potomac over and Grant in command, there was activity all over northern Virginia. About this time, Mosby got hold of a second twelve-pound howitzer, and, later, a twelve-pound Napoleon and added the Shenandoah Valley to his field of operations.

From then on, Mosby was fighting a war on two fronts, dividing his attention between the valley and the country to the east of Bull Run Mountain, his men using their spare horses freely to keep the Union rear on both sides in an uproar. The enemy, knowing the section from whence Mosby was operating, resorted to frequent counter-raiding. Often, returning from a raid, the Mosby men would find their home territory invaded and would have to intercept or fight off the invaders. At this time, Mosby was giving top priority to attacks on Union transport whether on the roads or the railroads. Wagon trains were in constant

movement, both moving up the Shenandoah Valley and bound for the Army of the Potomac, in front of Petersburg. To the east was the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, to the south, across the end of Mosby's Confederacy, was the Manassas Gap, and at the upper end of the valley was the B. & O. The section of the Manassas Gap Railroad along the southern boundary of Mosby's Confederacy came in for special attention, and the Union Army finally gave it up for a bad job and abandoned it. This writer's grandfather, Captain H. B. Piper, of the Eleventh Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, did a stint of duty guarding it, and until he died he spoke with respect of the abilities of John S. Mosby and his raiders. Locomotives were knocked out with one or another of Mosby's twelve-pounders. Track was torn up and bridges were burned. Land-mines were planted. Trains were derailed and looted, usually with sharp fighting.

By mid-July, Mosby had been promoted to lieutenant colonel and had a total strength of around 300 men, divided into five companies. His younger brother, William Mosby, had joined him and was acting as his adjutant. He now had four guns, all twelve-pounders—two howitzers, the Napoleon and a new rifle, presented to him by Jubal Early. He had a compact, well-disciplined and powerful army-in-miniature. After the Union defeat at Kernstown, Early moved back to the lower end of the Shenandoah Valley, and McCausland went off on his raid in to Pennsylvania, burning Chambersburg in retaliation for Hunter's burnings at Lexington and Buchanan in Virginia. Following his customary practice, Mosby made a crossing at another point and raided into Maryland as far as Adamstown, skirmishing and picking up a few prisoners and horses.

Early's invasion of Maryland, followed as it was by McCausland's sack of Chambersburg, was simply too much for the Union command. The Shenandoah situation had to be cleaned up immediately, and, after some top-echelon dickering, Grant picked Phil Sheridan to do the cleaning. On August 7, Sheridan assumed command of the heterogeneous Union forces in the Shenandoah and began welding them into an army. On the 10th, he started south after Early, and Mosby, who generally had a good idea of what was going on at Union headquarters, took a small party into the valley, intending to kidnap the new commander as he had Stoughton. Due mainly to the vigilance of a camp sentry, the plan failed, but Mosby picked up the news that a large wagon train was being sent up the valley, and he decided to have a try at this.

On the evening of the 12th, he was back in the valley with 330 men and his two howitzers. Spending the night at a plantation on the right bank of the Shenandoah River, he was on the move before daybreak, crossing the river and

pushing toward Berryville, with scouts probing ahead in the heavy fog. One of the howitzers broke a wheel and was pushed into the brush and left behind. As both pieces were of the same caliber, the caisson was taken along. A lieutenant and fifteen men, scouting ahead, discovered a small empty wagon train, going down the valley in the direction of Harper's Ferry, and they were about to attack it when they heard, in the distance, the rumbling of many heavily loaded wagons. This was the real thing. They forgot about the empty wagons and hastened back to Mosby and the main force to report.

Swinging to the left to avoid premature contact with the train, Mosby hurried his column in the direction of Berryville. On the way, he found a disabled wagon, part of the north-bound empty train, with the teamster and several infantrymen sleeping in it. These were promptly secured, and questioning elicited the information that the south-bound train consisted of 150 wagons, escorted by 250 cavalry and a brigade of infantry. Getting into position on a low hill overlooking the road a little to the east of Berryville, the howitzer was unlimbered and the force was divided on either side of it, Captain Adolphus Richards taking the left wing and Sam Chapman the right. Mosby himself remained with the gun. Action was to be commenced with the gun, and the third shot was to be the signal for both Richards and Chapman to charge.



At just the right moment, the fog lifted. The gun was quickly laid on the wagon train and fired, the first shot beheading a mule. The second shell hit the best sort of target imaginable—a mobile farrier's forge. There was a deadly shower of horseshoes, hand-tools and assorted ironmongery, inflicting casualties and causing a local panic. The third shell landed among some cavalry who were galloping up, scattering them, and, on the signal, Richards and Chapman charged simultaneously.

Some infantry at the head of the train met Richards with a volley, costing him one man killed and several wounded and driving his charge off at an angle into the middle of the train. The howitzer, in turn, broke up the infantry. Chapman, who had hit the rear of the train, was having easier going: his men methodically dragged the teamsters from their wagons, unhitched mules, overturned, looted and burned wagons. The bulk of the escort, including the infantry, were at the front of the train, with Richards' men between them and Chapman. Richards, while he had his hands full with these, was not neglecting the wagons, either,

though he was making less of a ceremony of it. A teamster was shot and dragged from his wagon-seat, a lighted bundle of inflammables tossed into the wagon, and pistols were fired around the mules' heads to start them running. The faster they ran, the more the flames behind them were fanned, and as the wagon went careening down the road, other wagons were ignited by it.

By 8 a. m., the whole thing was over. The escort had been scattered, the wagons were destroyed, and the victors moved off, in possession of 500-odd mules, thirty-six horses, about 200 head of beef cattle, 208 prisoners, four Negro slaves who had been forcibly emancipated to drive Army wagons, and large quantities of supplies. In one of the wagons, a number of violins, probably equipment for some prototype of the U.S.O., were found; the more musically inclined guerrillas appropriated these and enlivened the homeward march with music.



Of course, there was jubilation all over Mosby's Confederacy on their return. The mules were herded into the mountains, held for about a week, and then started off for Early's army. The beef herd was divided among the people, and there were barbecues and feasts. A shadow was cast over the spirits of the raiders, however, when the prisoners informed them, with considerable glee, that the train had been carrying upwards of a million dollars, the pay for Sheridan's army. Even allowing for exaggeration, the fact that they had overlooked this treasure was a bitter pill for the Mosbyites. According to local tradition, however, the fortune was not lost completely; there were stories of a Berryville family who had been quite poor before the war but who blossomed into unexplained affluence afterward.

Less than a week later, on August 19, Mosby was in the valley again with 250 men, dividing his force into several parties after crossing the river at Castleman's Ford. Richards, with "B" Company, set off toward Charlestown. Mosby himself took "A" toward Harper's Ferry on an uneventful trip during which the only enemies he encountered were a couple of stragglers caught pillaging a springhouse. It was Chapman, with "C" and "D," who saw the action on this occasion.

Going to the vicinity of Berryville, he came to a burning farmhouse, and learned that it had been fired only a few minutes before by some of Custer's cavalry. Leaving a couple of men to help the family control the fire and salvage their

possessions, he pressed on rapidly. Here was the thing every Mosby man had been hoping for—a chance to catch house burners at work. They passed a second blazing house and barn, dropping off a couple more men to help fight fire, and caught up with the incendiaries, a company of Custer's men, just as they were setting fire to a third house. Some of these, knowing the quality of mercy they might expect from Mosby men, made off immediately at a gallop. About ninety of them, however, tried to form ranks and put up a fight. The fight speedily became a massacre. Charging with shouts of "No quarters!", Chapman's men drove them into a maze of stone fences and killed about a third of them before the rest were able to extricate themselves.

This didn't stop the house burnings, by any means. The devastation of the Shenandoah Valley had been decided upon as a matter of strategy, and Sheridan was going through with it. The men who were ordered to do the actual work did not have their morale improved any by the knowledge that Mosby's Rangers were refusing quarter to incendiary details, however, and, coming as it did on the heels of the wagon train affair of the 13th, Sheridan was convinced that something drastic would have to be done about Mosby. Accordingly, he set up a special company, under a Captain William Blazer, each man armed with a pair of revolvers and a Spencer repeater, to devote their entire efforts to eliminating Mosby and his organized raiders.

On September 3, this company caught up with Joe Nelson and about 100 men in the valley and gave them a sound drubbing, the first that the Mosby men had experienced for some time. It was a humiliating defeat for them, and, on the other side, it was hailed as the beginning of the end of the Mosby nuisance. A few days later, while raiding to the east of Bull Run Mountain, Mosby was wounded again, and was taken to Lynchburg. He was joined by his wife, who remained with him at Lynchburg and at Mosby's Confederacy until the end of the war.

During his absence, the outfit seems to have been run by a sort of presidium of the senior officers. On September 22, Sam Chapman took 120 men into the valley to try to capture a cavalry post supposed to be located near Front Royal, but, arriving there, he learned that his information had been incorrect and that no such post existed. Camping in the woods, he sent some men out as scouts, and the next morning they reported a small wagon train escorted by about 150 cavalry, moving toward Front Royal. Dividing his force and putting half of it under Walter Frankland, he planned to attack the train from the rear while Frankland hit it from in front. After getting into position, he kept his men

concealed, waiting for the wagons to pass, and as it did, he realized that his scouts had seen only a small part of it. The escort looked to him like about three regiments. Ordering his men to slip away as quietly as possible, he hurried to reach Frankland.

"Turn around, Walter!" he yelled. "Get your men out of here! You're attacking a whole brigade!"

"What of it?" Frankland replied. "Why, Sam, we have the bastards on the run already!"

Chapman, the erstwhile clergyman, turned loose a blast of theological language in purely secular connotation. Frankland, amazed at this blasphemous clamor from his usually pious comrade, realized that it must have been inspired by something more than a little serious, and began ordering his men to fall back. Before they had all gotten away, two of the three Union regiments accompanying the wagons came galloping up and swamped them. Most of the men got away but six of them, Anderson, Carter, Overby, Love, Rhodes and Jones, were captured.

Late that night some of the stragglers, making their way back to Mosby's Confederacy on foot, reported the fate of these six men. They had been taken into Front Royal, and there, at the personal order of General George A. Custer, and under circumstances of extreme brutality, they had all been hanged. Rhodes' mother, who lived in Front Royal, had been forced to witness the hanging of her son.

To put it conservatively, there was considerable excitement in Mosby's Confederacy when the news of this atrocity was received. The senior officers managed to restore a measure of calmness, however, and it was decided to wait until Mosby returned before taking any action on the matter.

In addition to the hangings at Front Royal, Custer was acquiring a bad reputation because of his general brutality to the people of the Shenandoah Valley. After the battle of the Little Bighorn, Sitting Bull would have probably won any popularity contest in northern Virginia without serious competition.

On September 29, Mosby was back with his command; his wound had not been as serious as it might have been for the bullet had expended most of its force against the butt of one of the revolvers in his belt. Operations against the railroads had been allowed to slacken during Mosby's absence; now they were

stepped up again. Track was repeatedly torn up along the Manassas Gap line, and there were attacks on camps and strong points, and continual harassing of wood-cutting parties obtaining fuel for the locomotives. The artillery was taken out, and trains were shelled. All this, of course, occasioned a fresh wave of Union raids into the home territory of the raiders, during one of which Yank Ames, who had risen to a lieutenancy in the Forty-Third, was killed.

The most desperate efforts were being made, at this time, to keep the Manassas Gap Railroad open, and General C. C. Augur, who had charge of the railroad line at the time, was arresting citizens indiscriminately and forcing them to ride on the trains as hostages. Mosby obtained authorization from Lee's headquarters to use reprisal measures on officers and train crews of trains on which citizens were being forced to ride, and also authority to execute prisoners from Custer's command in equal number to the men hanged at Front Royal and elsewhere.

It was not until November that he was able to secure prisoners from Custer's brigade, it being his intention to limit his retaliation to men from units actually involved in the hangings. On November 6, he paraded about twenty-five such prisoners and forced them to draw lots, selecting, in this manner, seven of them—one for each of the men hanged at Front Royal and another for a man named Willis who had been hanged at Gaines' Cross Roads several weeks later. It was decided that they should be taken into the Shenandoah Valley and hanged beside the Valley Pike, where their bodies could serve as an object lesson. On the way, one of them escaped. Four were hanged, and then, running out of rope, they prepared to shoot the other two. One of these got away during a delay caused by defective percussion caps on his executioner's revolver.

A sign was placed over the bodies, setting forth the reason for their execution, and Mosby also sent one of his men under a flag of truce to Sheridan's headquarters, with a statement of what had been done and why, re-enforced with the intimation that he had more prisoners, including a number of officers, in case his messenger failed to return safely. Sheridan replied by disclaiming knowledge of the Front Royal hangings, agreeing that Mosby was justified in taking reprisals, and assuring the Confederate leader that hereafter his men would be given proper treatment as prisoners of war. There was no repetition of the hangings.

By this time the Shenandoah Valley campaign as such was over. The last Confederate effort to clear Sheridan out of the Valley had failed at Cedar Creek on October 19, and the victor was going methodically about his task of destroying the strategic and economic usefulness of the valley. How well he succeeded in this was best expressed in Sheridan's own claim that a crow flying over the region would have to carry his own rations. The best Mosby could do was to launch small raiding parties to harass the work of destruction.

By the beginning of December, the northern or Loudoun County end of Mosby's Confederacy was feeling the enemy scourge as keenly as the valley, and the winter nights were lighted with the flames of burning houses and barns. For about a week, while this was going on, Mosby abandoned any attempt at organized action. His men, singly and in small parties, darted in and out among the invaders, sniping and bushwhacking, attacking when they could and fleeing when they had to, and taking no prisoners. When it was over, the northern end of Mosby's Confederacy was in ashes and most of the people had "refugeed out," but Mosby's Rangers, as a fighting force, was still intact. On December 17, for instance, while Mosby was in Richmond conferring with General Lee, they went into the valley again in force, waylaying a column of cavalry on the march, killing and wounding about thirty and bringing off 168 prisoners and horses.

When Mosby came back from Lee's headquarters, a full colonel now, his brother William was made a lieutenant-colonel, and Richards became a major. The southern, or Fauquier County, end of Mosby's Confederacy was still more or less intact, though crowded with refugees. There was even time, in spite of everything, for the wedding of the Forty-Third's armorer, Jake Lavender, with John and Jimmy Edmonds' sister.

While the wedding party was in progress, a report was brought in to the effect that Union cavalry were in the neighborhood of Salem, a few miles away. Mosby took one of his men, Tom Love, a relative of one of the Front Royal victims, and went to investigate, finding that the enemy had moved in the direction of Rectortown, where they were making camp for the night. Sending a resident of the neighborhood to alert Chapman and Richards for an attack at daybreak, Mosby and Love set out to collect others of his command.

By this time, it was dark, with a freezing rain covering everything with ice. Mosby and Love decided to stop at the farm of Ludwell Lake for something to eat before going on; Love wanted to stay outside on guard, but Mosby told him

to get off his horse and come inside. As they would have been in any house in the neighborhood, Mosby and his companion were welcomed as honored guests and sat down with the family to a hearty meal of spareribs.

While they were eating, the house was surrounded by Union cavalry. Mosby rushed to the back door, to find the backyard full of soldiers. He started for the front door, but as he did, it burst open and a number of Yankees, officers and men, entered the house. At the same time, the soldiers behind, having seen the back door open and shut, began firing at the rear windows, and one bullet hit Mosby in the abdomen. In the confusion, with the women of the Lake family screaming, the soldiers cursing, and bullets coming through the windows, the kitchen table was overturned and the lights extinguished. Mosby in the dark, managed to crawl into a first-floor bedroom, where he got off his tell-tale belt and coat, stuffing them under the bed. Then he lay down on the floor.

After a while, the shooting outside stopped, the officers returned, and the candles were relighted. The Union officers found Mosby on the floor, bleeding badly, and asked the family who he was. They said, of course, that they did not know, and neither did Tom Love—he was only a Confederate officer on his way to rejoin his command, who had stopped for a night's lodging. There was a surgeon with the Union detachment. After they got most of Mosby's clothes off and put him on the bed, he examined the wounded Confederate and pronounced his wound mortal. When asked his name and unit, Mosby, still conscious, hastily improvised a false identity, at the same time congratulating himself on having left all his documents behind when starting on this scouting trip. Having been assured, by medical authority, that he was as good as dead, the Union officers were no longer interested in him and soon went away.

Fortunately, on his visit to Lee's headquarters, Mosby had met an old schoolmate, a Dr. Montiero, who was now a surgeon with the Confederate Army, and, persuading him to get a transfer, had brought him back with him. Montiero's new C.O. was his first patient in his new outfit. Early the next morning, he extracted the bullet. The next night Mosby was taken to Lynchburg.

Despite the Union doctor's pronouncement of his impending death, Mosby was back in action again near the end of February, 1865. His return was celebrated with another series of raids on both sides of the mountains. It was, of course, obvious to everybody that the sands of the Confederacy were running out, but the true extent of the debacle was somewhat obscured to Mosby's followers by their own immediate successes. Peace rumors began drifting about, the favorite item of wish-thinking being that the Union government was going to recognize the Confederacy and negotiate a peace in return for Confederate help in throwing the French out of Mexico. Of course, Mosby himself never believed any such nonsense, but he continued his attacks as though victory were just around the corner. On April 5, two days after the Union army entered Richmond, a party of fifty Mosby men caught their old enemies, the Loudoun Rangers, in camp near Halltown and beat them badly. On April 9, the day of Lee's surrender, "D" Company and the newly organized "H" Company fired the last shots for the Forty-Third Virginia in a skirmish in Fairfax County. Two days later, Mosby received a message from General Hancock, calling for his surrender.

He sent a group of his officers—William Mosby, Sam Chapman, Walter Frankland and Dr. Montiero—with a flag of truce, and, after several other meetings with Hancock, the command was disbanded and most of the men went in to take the parole.

When his armistice with Hancock expired, Mosby found himself with only about forty irreconcilables left out of his whole command. As General Joe Johnston had not yet surrendered, he did not feel justified in getting out of the fight, himself. With his bloodied but unbowed handful, he set out on the most ambitious project of his entire military career—nothing less than a plan to penetrate into Richmond and abduct General Grant. If this scheme succeeded, it was his intention to dodge around the Union Army, carry his distinguished prisoner to Johnston, and present him with a real bargaining point for negotiating terms.

They reached the outskirts of Richmond and made a concealed camp across the river, waiting for darkness. In the meanwhile, two of the party, both natives of the city, Munson and Cole Jordan, went in to scout. Several hours passed, and neither returned. Mosby feared that they had been picked up by Union patrols. He was about to send an older man, Lieutenant Ben Palmer, when a canal-boat passed, and, hailing it, they learned of Johnston's surrender.

That was the end of the scheme to kidnap Grant. As long as a Confederate force

was still under arms, it would have been a legitimate act of war. Now, it would be mere brigandage, and Mosby had no intention of turning brigand.

So Mosby returned to Fauquier County to take the parole. For him, the fighting was over, but he was soon to discover that the war was not. At that time, Edwin M. Stanton was making frantic efforts to inculcate as many prominent Confederates as possible in the Booth conspiracy, and Mosby's name was suggested as a worthy addition to Stanton's long and fantastic list of alleged conspirators. A witness was produced to testify that Mosby had been in Washington on the night of the assassination, April 14. At that time, Stanton was able to produce a witness to almost anything he wanted to establish. Fortunately, Mosby had an alibi; at the time in question, he had been at Hancock's headquarters, discussing armistice terms; even Stanton couldn't get around that.

However, he was subjected to considerable petty persecution, and once he was flung into jail without charge and held incommunicado. His wife went to Washington to plead his case before President Johnson, who treated her with a great deal less than courtesy, and then before General Grant, who promptly gave her a written order for her husband's release.

Then, in 1868, he did something which would have been social and political suicide for any Southerner with a less imposing war record. He supported Ulysses S. Grant for President. It was about as unexpected as any act in an extremely unconventional career, and, as usual, he had a well-reasoned purpose. Grant, he argued, was a professional soldier, not a politician. His enmity toward the South had been confined to the battlefield and had ended with the war. He had proven his magnanimity to the defeated enemy, and as President, he could be trusted to show fairness and clemency to the South.

While Virginia had not voted in the election of 1868, there is no question that Mosby's declaration of support helped Grant, and Grant was grateful, inviting Mosby to the White House after his inauguration and later appointing him to the United States consulate at Hong Kong. After the expiration of his consular service, Mosby resumed his law practice, eventually taking up residence in Washington. He found time to write several books—war reminiscences and memoirs, and a volume in vindication of his former commander, Jeb Stuart, on the Confederate cavalry in the Gettysburg campaign. He died in Washington, at the age of eighty-three, in 1916.

The really important part of John Mosby's career, of course, was the two years

and three months, from January, 1863, to April, 1865, in which he held independent command. With his tiny force—it never exceeded 500 men—he had compelled the Union army to employ at least one and often as high as three brigades to guard against his depredations, and these men, held in the rear, were as much out of the war proper as though they had been penned up in Andersonville or Libby Prison.

In addition to this, every northward movement of the Confederate Army after January, 1863, was accompanied by a diversionary operation of Mosby's command, sometimes tactically insignificant but always contributing, during the critical time of the operation, to the uncertainty of Union intelligence. Likewise, every movement to the south of the Army of the Potomac was harassed from behind.

It may also be noted that Sheridan, quite capable of dealing with the menace of Stuart, proved helpless against the Mosby nuisance, although, until they were wiped out, Blazer's Scouts were the most efficient anti-Mosby outfit ever employed. In spite of everything that was done against them, however, Mosby's Rangers stayed in business longer than Lee's army, and when they finally surrendered, it was not because they, themselves, had been defeated, but because the war had been literally jerked out from under them.

Mosby made the cavalry a formidable amalgamation of fire power and mobility and his influence on military history was felt directly, and survived him by many years. In his last days, while living in Washington, the old Confederate guerrilla had a youthful friend, a young cavalry lieutenant fresh from West Point, to whom he enjoyed telling the stories of his raids and battles and to whom he preached his gospel of fire and mobility. This young disciple of Mosby's old age was to make that gospel his own, and to practice it, later, with great success. The name of this young officer was George S. Patton, Jr.—**H. Beam Piper**

Jeb Stuart left John Singleton Mosby behind Northern lines "to look after loyal Confederate people." But before the war was over, Mosby did a lot more than that....

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