

THE CAPTURE OF GENERAL MARMADUKE BY  
JAMES DUNLAVY AN IOWA PRIVATE  
CAVALRYMAN

Fame usually comes to men in an instant of time. The man of obscure name to-day may be receiving the plaudits of the public tomorrow. Lord Byron, after publishing his critique entitled *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, awoke one morning, as he himself has stated, and found himself famous. Robert Burns, one of the world's greatest poets and song writers, left his plow in the field near his humble Ayrshire home, and under the spur of necessity published a small volume of poems. He immediately found himself courted and admired by the foremost literary and intellectual people of the Scottish capital. When a call for volunteers was issued during the Spanish-American War for men to sink the Merrimac in the channel of Santiago Bay, Lieutenant Richmond P. Hobson responded, and with seven men performed a deed of heroism rarely equalled in history. He literally leaped into fame on account of the successful performance of this daring enterprise. Instances of a similar character might be greatly multiplied.

In like manner, though in a lesser degree, enduring fame came to an Iowa private cavalryman during the closing months of the War of the Rebellion. This soldier was James Dunlavy, of Company D, Third Iowa Cavalry. A single act of bravery, but which clearly showed the heroic spirit of the man, was sufficient to place his name high upon the scroll of honorable achievement. It was an act which entitles him to lasting remembrance in the annals of Iowa, and which must ever be regarded with pleasure and pride by his descendants.

James Dunlavy was born in Decatur County, Indiana, on February 4, 1844. At the age of four years he came with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Dunlavy, to Davis County, Iowa. Here he attended the common schools of the county, and grew into a vigorous young manhood. His father, Harvey Dunlavy, was a prominent and influential citizen. He was a lawyer, but he also devoted considerable time and attention to farming, and although not an office-seeker he was nevertheless called by the citizens of Davis County to various positions of trust and honor. He was twice elected to the lower house of the State legislature, and served during the regular and extra sessions of the Eighth and Ninth General Assemblies.<sup>1</sup> He reared a large family, members of which still reside in Davis County.

James Dunlavy, although under the age of eighteen years, proffered his services to his country when the Civil War broke out, first enlisting in Company F, Thirtieth Iowa Volunteer Infantry, but he was rejected by the mustering officer on September 23, 1862.<sup>2</sup> Nothing daunted by his rejection, however, he again offered his services, re-enlisting in Company D, Third Iowa Cavalry, on November 30, 1863. He was mustered into the service on January 15, 1864, and mustered out on August 9, 1865, at Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>3</sup> At the close of the war, he returned to his home in Davis County, and soon thereafter took up the study of medicine, graduating from the Keokuk Medical College in 1870, and for a period of thirty-two years he successfully practiced his profession at Stiles, in Davis County, where he was well and favorably known. On March 24, 1870, Mr. Dunlavy was united in marriage to Letitia C. Von Achen, and to them four children were born: C. A. Dunlavy, now residing in New York City; S. W. Dunlavy, M. D., of

<sup>1</sup> *Iowa Official Register*, 1911-1912, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Roster of Iowa Soldiers*, Vol. III, p. 1510.

<sup>3</sup> *Roster of Iowa Soldiers*, Vol. IV, p. 489.

Cherryvale, Kansas; H. D. Dunlavy,<sup>4</sup> of Ottumwa, Iowa; and Mrs. M. A. Hedges, of Washunga, Oklahoma.<sup>5</sup> In 1892, Dr. Dunlavy removed from Stiles to Maramec, Oklahoma, where he now resides.

It was while serving as a private in Company D, Third Iowa Cavalry, that James Dunlavy performed a deed which entitled him to recognition as a brave and gallant soldier, and proved him equal to the demands of war as well as of peace. On the 25th day of October, 1864, single-handed and alone, while suffering from a severe wound in the right arm caused by a missile thrown off from a bursting shell, and while riding a horse which had been wounded by the same shell, Dunlavy captured and received the surrender of the Confederate Major General, John S. Marmaduke, at Osage, Kansas. This feat is unique in that it is probably the only instance in recorded history of the capture of a Major General by a private soldier on the field of battle.

The battle of Mine Creek, at Osage, Kansas, was fought on the 25th day of October, 1864. The firing began early in the day, and culminated about 8 o'clock a. m. in the defeat of the Confederates. The Union forces, comprising ten brigades of cavalry, were commanded by Colonels Benteen and Phillips. The shattered forces of the Confederate General, Sterling Price, were rapidly falling back, with the Federals in close and vigorous pursuit. General Marmaduke had been assigned the task of holding the Federal troops in check until Price's train could cross Mine Creek. Benteen was on his right, Phillips was on his left, and Mine Creek was in the rear. General Marmaduke's

<sup>4</sup> The writer hereof acknowledges his indebtedness to Mr. H. D. Dunlavy, of Ottumwa, for valuable information concerning the life of Dr. Dunlavy, and for much information from Dr. Dunlavy himself regarding the capture of General Marmaduke.

<sup>5</sup> *History of Davis County*, p. 670.

position therefore was anything but enviable. The columns of Benteen moved forward with precision and determination, and fell upon Marmaduke's troops with irresistible force, capturing his artillery and putting to rout his center and right.<sup>6</sup>

Upon the extreme right of the Third Iowa rode private James Dunlavy. Notwithstanding the fact that both himself and horse had been wounded, the young soldier, who had not yet attained his majority, refused to go to the rear, but on the contrary kept his place at the front and in the line of battle, thus displaying high courage and efficiency as a soldier. As Marmaduke's men broke before the terrific onslaught of Benteen's forces, Dunlavy's horse suddenly wheeled to the rear.

When he had succeeded in bringing his frightened and unruly horse to the front again, Dunlavy beheld to his surprise that his brigade was far in advance of him. Looking to the right across the level field he saw some troops who he supposed from their appearance were Federals, and he spurred his horse toward them. But another surprise awaited him, for he soon discovered that, although dressed in Federal uniforms, they were in fact some of Marmaduke's men in full retreat. He also observed upon the field an officer in Confederate uniform. This officer started toward Dunlavy, riding at a rapid gait, and shouting to him: "What do you mean by firing at your own men?" Whereupon, Dunlavy brought his gun to his shoulder and fired point blank at the Confederate officer, but owing to the great distance intervening and the wounded condition of his arm, the charge from his gun proved harmless and the life of the officer was saved.

Dunlavy then reined his horse to a trot, and the officer, who continued to advance rapidly, was soon at his side,

<sup>6</sup> *Roster of Iowa Soldiers*, Vol. IV, p. 435; and Crawford's *Kansas in the Sixties*, pp. 157-164.

evidently in the belief that Dunlavy was one of his own men. The young cavalryman, however, was master of the situation. He saw at once his opportunity and his duty. He immediately brought his carbine to his shoulder and demanded the officer's revolver, at which the officer appeared greatly surprised; but as he gazed into the clear, steady eyes and determined face of the young soldier, General Marmaduke realized that the youth meant business, and he replied, "I surrender; I thought I was with one of my own men". Thereupon he handed over his pistol.

Having displayed courage and coolness which would have done credit to a man of maturer years, Dunlavy next sought to deliver his prisoner to some one authorized to receive him. He therefore immediately started to the rear with the prisoner. A Federal officer who was in need of a horse asked Dunlavy for the horse of the prisoner, whereupon Dunlavy ordered his prisoner to dismount and deliver the horse to the Federal officer, which order General Marmaduke obeyed in the coolest possible manner and in the most approved military style. Both being now dismounted, Dunlavy again started for the rear with his prisoner on the double quick. They had not gone far, however, when the captive General stated to his captor that he had been up all night and was exceedingly weary and sleepy and asked to be allowed to slow down to a walk. This request was granted, but when he asked for a horse he was advised by Dunlavy that he could not have one. General Marmaduke then asked to be taken to General Pleasanton, stating that he was personally acquainted with that officer; and to this request Dunlavy replied that if the officer named could be found the prisoner should be permitted to see him. General Marmaduke remarked, "I will tell you who I am;" but at that moment a member of General Pleasanton's staff came up, and the prisoner introduced himself.

Again Dunlavy started to the rear with his distinguished prisoner, who asked him into the hands of what troops he had fallen. Upon being informed that he had been captured by a member of an Iowa regiment, he remarked that he was glad he was in the hands of Iowa troops instead of Kansas troops, apparently believing that he would fare better among the former than among the latter. They had gone but a short distance when they met General C. W. Blair, to whom Dunlavy delivered his prisoner. Thereupon General Blair procured a horse for General Marmaduke and, turning to Dunlavy, requested him to accompany them to the headquarters of General Curtis. Blair introduced Marmaduke to General Curtis, and immediately afterward presented James Dunlavy as the captor of the Confederate General. General Curtis gazed for a moment at the youthful hero, and then remarked that he and Dunlavy were from the same State, and that he was acquainted with the young man's father.

Having made the proper disposition of his prisoner, Dunlavy started in the direction of the field hospital for the purpose of having his wounded arm dressed, when a Federal officer rode up to him, grasped his hand and shook it warmly, and said: "My boy, you will hear of this day's work in years to come."

Thanking the officer for his kind words, he continued his journey to the hospital, where his wound was dressed, and he then set out for the front in company with a comrade. He had not traveled far, however, before his wounded arm began to bleed and cause him great pain, and he at length decided it would be best to return to Fort Scott. That night it rained, and Mr. Dunlavy in writing of his experience on this occasion, said: "My feelings can better be imagined than described. A boy away from home the first time, a stranger in a strange place, wet, wounded, dirty and homesick. But General Blair sent for me, and treated me

with great kindness. A load was thus removed from my heart, for which I shall always be grateful."<sup>7</sup>

As soon as his arm was well enough for duty, Dunlavy left Fort Scott, rejoined his regiment, and remained with it through all of its campaigns in Missouri, Tennessee, and Georgia, until finally mustered out, proving himself upon all occasions a brave, faithful, and dutiful soldier.

Among the most valued and cherished mementos now in the possession of Dr. James Dunlavy is a case containing two very handsome gold mounted Colt's navy pistols, presented to him by Major A. C. Van Duyn, upon behalf of the citizens of Fort Scott, Kansas, in recognition of his gallant conduct in the capture of General Marmaduke. This case of pistols was accompanied by a letter, of which the following is a copy:

Fort Scott, Kan. Decbr. 15th, 1864.

JAMES DUNLAVY,

Co. D. 3d Iowa Vet. Cavly —

Sir: I am delegated by the citizens of Fort Scott to present to you this case of pistols, as a testimonial of your distinguished services and bravery in the capture of Maj. General Marmaduke, at the battle of Osage, Kansas — Oct. 25th, 1864.

With just pride, they make this acknowledgment to a private soldier. They, after all, are the real heroes, in this costly and bloody struggle for national life.

Your patient, soldierly deportment, while in hospital, suffering from your wound, has not been unnoticed; and now as you are about to go again to the field, they bid you Godspeed, hoping that the blessings of heaven, and the honors of the Republic may be yours.

Truly your friend,

A. C. VAN DUYN.<sup>8</sup>

Inside the lid of this pistol case is a small plate, on which is engraved the following inscription:

<sup>7</sup> *Uncle Sam Medals of Honor*. This is a volume containing accounts of the medals awarded to Union soldiers in recognition of distinguished services.

<sup>8</sup> Original in the possession of Dr. Dunlavy.

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FORT SCOTT, KANSAS  
PRIVATE JAMES DUNLAVY  
Co. D, 3RD IOWA CAV.  
CAPTOR OF MAJ. GEN. MARMADUKE  
OSAGE, OCT. 25TH, 1864.

Dr. Dunlavy also has a very fine album, and a handsome copy of the poetical works of Thomas Moore, presented to him at the same time by the ladies of Fort Scott, on account of his gallant conduct in capturing General Marmaduke.

Furthermore, the Board of Supervisors of Davis County, Dr. Dunlavy's former home, adopted and placed on their records the following resolution, a copy of which was sent to Dunlavy:

Bloomfield, Iowa, Jan. 5, 1865.

Whereas, it has come to the knowledge of the citizens of this County that private James Dunlavy, Co. D, 3rd Iowa Cavalry, did in the late battle of Mine Creek, Kansas, between the Federal and Rebel forces, after being severely wounded in the arm, by his own personal daring and courage, rush upon and compel the noted General Marmaduke (Rebel) to surrender to him as a prisoner of War,

Therefore, be it resolved, that we hereby tender to the said James Dunlavy the thanks of the citizens of this County for his brave, faithful and distinguished services.

Be it further resolved that the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors be directed to spread this proceeding upon the record of this Board and that he furnish the said James Dunlavy with a copy of same under seal.

I, William Law, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of Davis County, Iowa, hereby certify that the foregoing is a correct copy of proceedings had by said Board at its January Term, 1865.

Witness my hand and official seal this 12th day of January, A. D., 1865.

(Signed) WM. J. LAW, Clerk.<sup>9</sup>

There are yet other testimonials to the distinguished service of the young soldier, among which may be men-

<sup>9</sup> *Supervisors' Record of Davis County*, Book "A", p. 381 (1861-1868).

tioned a very handsome medal of honor awarded to him by Congress in January, 1865, and which is highly prized by Dr. Dunlavy. The presentation of this medal was accompanied by a letter from the War Department, which reads as follows:

War Department, Adjutant General's Office.  
Washington, March 29, 1865.

Sir: Herewith I enclose the medal of Honor which has been awarded you by the Secretary of War under the Resolution of Congress approved July 12th, 1862, to provide for the presentation of Medals of Honor to enlisted men of the army and volunteer forces who have distinguished or may distinguish themselves in battle during the present rebellion. Please acknowledge the receipt of it.

Very Respectfully,

PRIVATE JAMES DUNLAVY,  
Co. D, 3rd Iowa Cav.

Your obedient servant,  
G. D. TOWNSEND,  
Assistant Adjutant General.<sup>10</sup>

On the back of the medal is engraved the following inscription:

THE CONGRESS  
TO  
PRIVATE JAMES DUNLAVY  
Co. D,  
3RD IOWA VET. CAVL.

Finally, there is still another testimonial to James Dunlavy's bravery which should not be overlooked. Major Jones, in his official report giving an account of the battle of Mine Creek, wrote as follows:

We charged the enemy, breaking his right and center, killing, wounding and capturing many of his men. Among the captured were Generals Marmaduke and Cabell, the former by Private James Dunlavy, of Company D, and the latter by Sergeant C. M. Young, of Company L, both of the Third Iowa Cavalry.<sup>11</sup>

Considering the distinction of the prisoner, the extreme

<sup>10</sup> Original in the possession of Dr. Dunlavy.

<sup>11</sup> *Roster of Iowa Soldiers*, Vol. IV, p. 435.

youth of his captor, the courage and promptitude displayed by the latter in a trying and critical moment, and the clear and satisfactory evidence establishing the authenticity of the heroic deed, Private James Dunlavy is justly entitled to be honored as one of the bravest private soldiers in the Union Army during "the days which tried men's souls."

THOMAS JULIAN BRYANT

GRISWOLD, IOWA