

PERILOUS ADVENTURES TOLD BY AND OF LIVING PERSONS

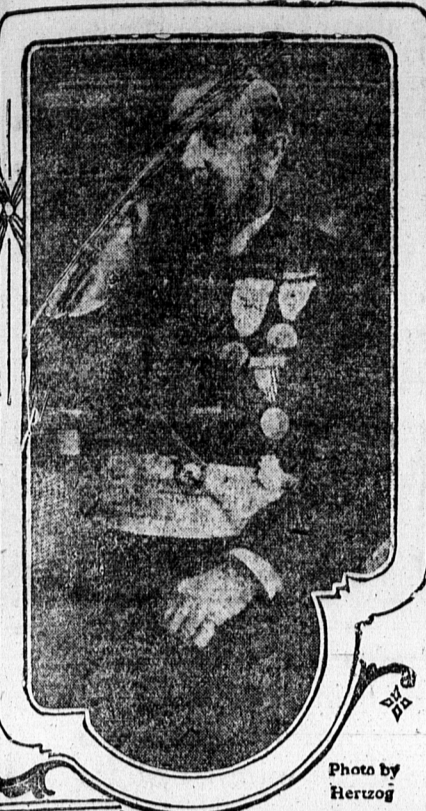


Photo by Herzog

MAJOR MARSHALL HOWELL

GENERAL J. MADISON DRAKE, historian of the Army and Navy Medal of Honor Legion, has the records of many extraordinary adventures of the civil war in which individual heroes of the great struggle were pitted against long odds. Among them is that of Marshall Howell, of the Ninth New Jersey Volunteers, who is still hale and hearty, residing at Pen Argyle, Pa. The facts for the story here given were furnished by General Drake.

They picked Marshall Howell for the service because they noted in him that combination of daring and coolness which recommends men for the hazardous work of the spy and that unselfish patriotism which leads men to accept the chance of inglorious and wretched death.

It was before Petersburg, about June 1, 1864. General Butler had just received a severe check from the forces under Beauregard at Drewry's Bluff and was then occupying an impregnable position at Bermuda Hundred. It was essential that some information be obtained concerning the fortifications at Petersburg, the conditions in that city and the disposition of the Confederates in the neighborhood.

General Butler instituted inquiries among his troops for volunteers willing to venture into the hostile lines on this dangerous mission. Colonel James Stewart, Jr., commander of the Ninth New Jersey Volunteers, presented the name of Howell, a private in Company H of his regiment, and after consideration of his record for bravery and efficiency he was selected.

Howell prepared for the undertaking with a careful disguise. A ragged suit of butternut was obtained from a Confederate prisoner, shoes to match. For weapons he took a revolver of large calibre and a long bowie knife, keen as a razor. If captured he was to represent himself as a guerilla of Southern sympathies or a Confederate who had wandered from his command. From General Butler he received broad instructions as to the information desired and a roll of new Confederate paper money. For the rest he was to trust to his wits and to his knowledge of the country about Waltham Junction and Swift Creek, where he had previously done scout duty and which he would have to traverse in approaching the city.

He left the federal lines after dark and travelled all night toward Petersburg without incident, following the bypaths and woodland trails. By dawn he was well up to the enemy's ground on the outskirts of the city, near the left bank of the Appomattox. It was his intention to take shelter for the day in a copse, but in making his way through the underbrush he came upon a small clearing in which stood a tiny slab cabin. An aged negro was pottering about the garden, and Howell, assuring himself that there was no one else about, approached him.

The negro was suspicious at first, but the scout set to work to win his confidence and let fall cautious hints of his mission, which met quick sympathy and response. Finally Howell ventured upon an open plea for assistance, which resulted in a complete understanding with the old fellow. He was invited to breakfast, and while he ate his host showed that he was eager and able to aid the cause of the Confederacy. This meeting proved the happiest possible chance to Howell. The negro was remarkably intelligent and had been in constant touch with the situation in Petersburg, which he visited daily. The scout remained hidden in the cabin throughout the day, obtaining valuable facts as to the Confederate strength, fortifications and movements about the city. The negro supplied him with recent copies of Petersburg papers which were highly important to Howell's purpose and helped him to a knowledge of the surrounding roads.

After spending the night in the cabin the scout felt sure enough of his position to attempt next morning a partial circuit of the Confederate camps. While engaged in this dangerous proceeding he was very nearly surprised by no less a person than General Beauregard himself. He had secreted himself behind a fence on a rise overlooking some of the camps when the sudden beat of hoofs sounded along the road. He had just time to fling himself into a depression when a little band of mounted officers in gray uniform swept by. At their head he recognized the able commander of the enemy's forces, and shortly

AFTER Pursuit Ashore the Fugitive Took to the River Amid a Rain of Confederate Bullets and Had to Fight for His Life When the Ferocious Beast Got Aboard His Frail Craft

afterward a division of infantry (Ransom's) followed. When Howell returned to the cabin in the afternoon he knew himself to be in possession of data which would be of the greatest value to General Butler if promptly delivered. He meant to start back over the way by which he had come at nightfall. After thanking his host he pressed upon the negro the roll of Confederate money as a reward for his services. The old fellow was overwhelmed by the generous gift and insisted that he had done nothing to deserve a fortune. He was eager to render further aid and suggested that if Howell would wait until dark he could lead the scout to the river, where he might find a canoe and return safely and quickly to the Union lines.

Howell consented to this plan and they left the cabin about eight o'clock that evening. The sky was somewhat cloudy and the moon frequently obscured, but the negro threaded the forest ways with the instinct of the woodsman and Howell followed at his heels. They had almost reached the river, when at a turn they were confronted by several Confederate soldiers, provost guards on patrol duty. One of them held a huge and ferocious bloodhound in leash

and began to search the shadows eagerly for a craft of some kind. He was still groping and crawling along the stringpiece when from the patch of forest land behind him he heard the deep baying of a hound drawing rapidly nearer.

Howell knew instantly that his escape had been discovered and that the dog was on his track. Plunging from the wharf into the shallows of the river he began to make his way along the shore, guiding his steps and steadying himself against the current by the branches that thrust out over the stream. He was a strong swimmer, but he hesitated to trust himself to the swollen and turbulent waters. For himself he felt no fear. But he carried with him a responsibility that made his life a precious thing.

He heard the dog spring out upon the wharf, and the crashing in the thicket showed that its keepers were just behind. Too late he knew that he should have covered his trail by leaving the wharf at the opposite side and wading around or under it. It was soon evident from excited shouts that the dog had indicated the spot at which he had taken to the water and that the pursuit was approaching along the shore.

He hurried on and had just determined to take to the deeper water when he blundered headlong over a

moon, which had fortunately been obscured up to now, was cleared of clouds and as if the scene shifters of the river had had their cue the surface and banks were flooded in sudden brilliant light.

Howell, fighting with his cranky, unwieldy craft, looked back. At a point not far from where he had embarked the shore was free of bushes and late this clear space he saw a strange form come leaping. Effects in moonlight are as weird and shifty as the play of shapes in an evil dream and it seemed to Howell as if some hideous monster of the pit had sprung from the ground. The dog he had glimpsed with the patrol was large and powerful. But now the beast was transformed, huge, terribly grotesque, with flaming eyes and slavering jaws. It caught sight of Howell at the same instant and with a last howl sprang from the bank into the river.

With desperate strokes of the paddle Howell now won free from the eddy and into the sweep of the current once more. He sought to accommodate the dugout to its force, not struggling against it, but trying to sheer gradually over toward the opposite side while running down with it. The canoe tipped and shipped water when the paddle turned in Howell's inexperienced hands and he narrowly escaped being

him away. The dog had fallen silent, watching over his shoulder the scout saw that he must be overtaken. The great black head in which the eyes blazed with a baleful reflection of the moonlight, came on rapidly, furiously as the raving beast drove along with powerful strokes. Each time he looked the distance between him and the animal was less, and try as he might he could not increase it.

There came a respite when the cloud swept over the moon. Howell redoubled his efforts to cut across stream, hoping that under cover of darkness the hound might swim on down the current. But when the light broke out again the head was scarcely ten feet behind him and the Confederates, hurrying along the shore, raised a cry of triumph.

Howell drew his revolver and, half turning where he crouched, took quick aim and fired. The hammer of the weapon fell dead. Rapidly he pulled again and again, and each time the revolver missed fire. In wading from the wharf he had been soaked to the armpits and the caps on all the chambers were useless.

Bowie Knife His Weapon.

The bloodhound was now close at hand, its white fangs showing as it came through the water toward its prey. Howell gave over paddling and raised the strip of wood, bringing it down with all his strength upon the animal's head. The puny weapon fell to slivers in his grasp, and he was left with no means of defence but his Bowie knife.

Drawing the keen blade from his right boot leg, he awaited the attack. When the dog was within reach he slashed violently. At the same instant the hound thrust itself almost clear of the water with a powerful stroke and plunged forward. Howell's movement, which had been futile, had brought the gunwale low. The animal landed half in the canoe and the scout could feel its hot breath in his face as it brought its jaws together with a ringing snap.

Water was pouring in over the side. The dog strove frantically to draw itself in and reach Howell. The scout, thrown violently from his balance, sprawled and tumbled. He was helpless for the moment. He clung to the lifted gunwale, bringing his weight to bear upon it and force it down.

The canoe righted partly and the hound was tilted backward. At the same instant Howell was able to brace himself briefly and thrust with his knife once more.

The dog, every muscle strained in the effort to overcome the check and hurt itself over the edge, gave him a fleeting chance. The savage jaws snapped at him once more, but he felt the blade strike the skin of the throat over the tense cords. With a sawing motion he slipped the knife through the flesh.

A spasmodic leap that all but capsize the water lodged craft, a hot gush of red, and the animal fell away, its hateful eyes glaring upon Howell to the last.

The Confederates, who had witnessed the struggle with satisfaction, shouted with anger at the defeat of their emissary and resumed their shooting. But the canoe was now beyond range and the broken character of the shore made further pursuit useless. Howell found himself relieved of immediate danger from his enemies, but in a very precarious position. The canoe was almost full. He had no means of guiding it. And he had lost his hat, with which he might have bailed.

Using his hands as a scoop he set about lowering the water in the craft. It was weary, discouraging work, but along toward dawn he had so far progressed that he was no longer in danger of swamping. Meanwhile he had been floating with the current, quite at the mercy of its vagaries, and he noticed that the canoe was being borne ever nearer and nearer to the side on which the Confederate army was encamped. Several times he saw the glow of firing camp fires and heard the stamping of picketed horses. It seemed not unlikely that he must drift aimlessly until some hostile outpost sighted and captured him. He tried paddling with his hands, and at last, just as the sky began to lighten, he was able to bring the canoe so far ashore that it grounded on a jutting bar.

He was now in the enemy's territory, where he must make shift to spend the day. His first care was to roll and empty the canoe, his next to find a place along the water's edge where he might hide it. Coming to a spot where the bushes overhung the stream, he shoved the dugout aside the natural barrier, moved it as best he could and stretched himself at full length upon the bottom.

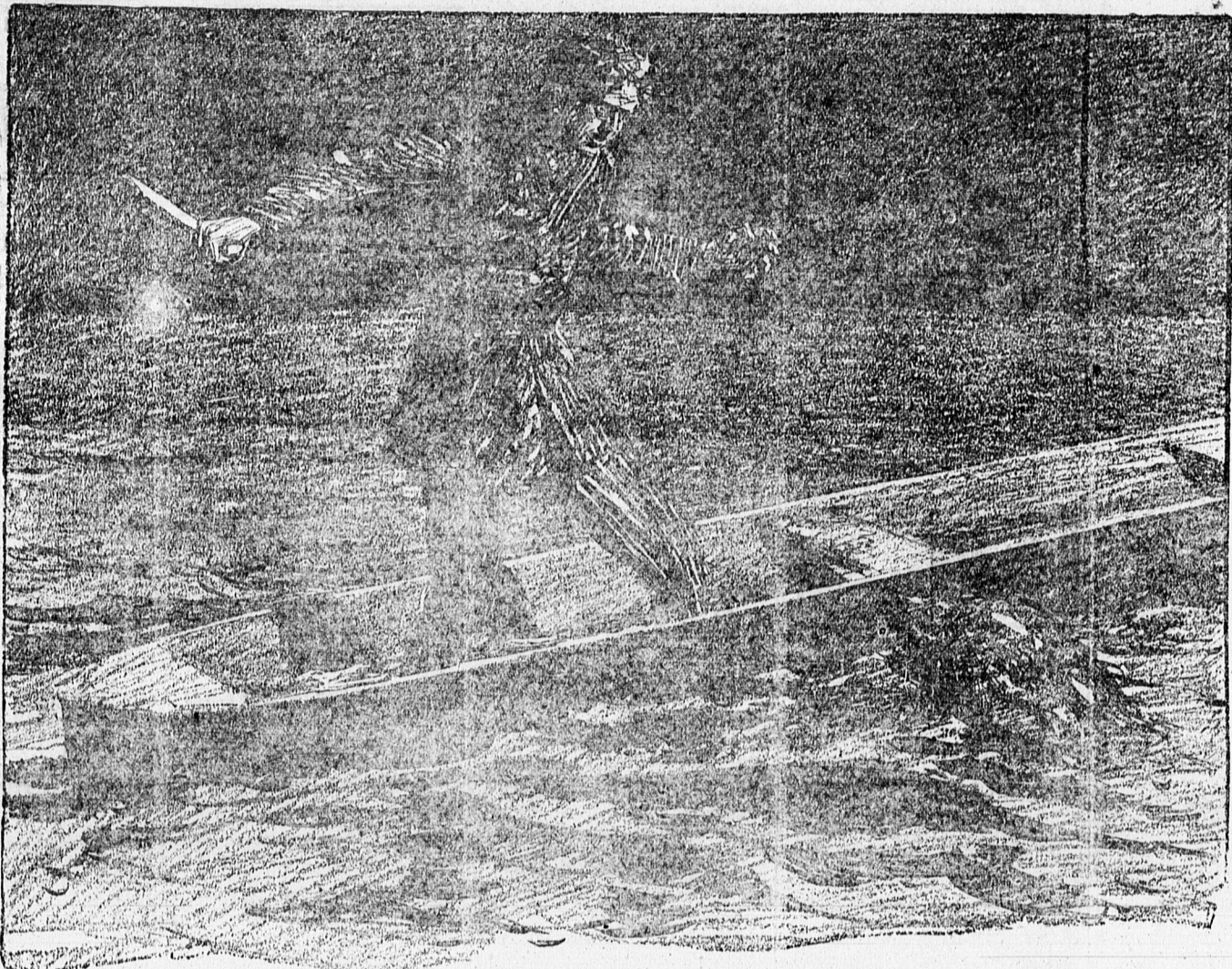
For fourteen hours Howell kept that position. He dared not move, scarcely to breathe. The sun rose to the calling of many lungs, and presently the stir of an extensive camp told him that he had taken up quarters within a stone's throw of the main Confederate position. The pleasant scent of cooking wafted to him. He fed on that scanty breakfast, dinner and supper.

All day long soldiers in gray uniforms were strolling along the shore above him. A group of them went bathing in the bar. He could hear every word they spoke, and he feared lest some more venturesome should swim about the bushes where he lay concealed. In the afternoon a young private found an overhanging rock not far from him whereon he installed himself with rod and line. Howell was a silent partner in that fishing venture, and the fisherman himself never wished half so earnestly for good luck as did Howell, that the man might speedily be taken himself off. Later horses were led down to the brink, and there was another danger of discovery from the cavalrymen.

It was with thankful heart that the famished scout saw the day waning. He waited until darkness had fallen and then cautiously lifted his cramped limbs and struggled ashore. He cut down a sapling with his knife and fastened himself a pole wherewith he might propel the dugout. Not until midnight, however, was he ready to leave his hiding place. He waited until all the camp noises had died down and the moon was again high before casting out into the stream and resuming his journey.

Returning to the Union Lines.

Fatigued, half starved, the scout poled his way through the night. He was running a continual risk from pickets and sentries and dared not take the middle of the stream. Hugging the bank he slipped slowly from shadow to shadow. He crossed the river by negotiating the passage that he was not once challenged, although he was several times within sight and halting distance of outposts.



Drawing the Keen Blade from His Right Boot Leg He Awaited the Attack.

At sight of the dog the negro became paralyzed with fright. He was instantly seized by the soldiers. All residents of the neighborhood were forbidden to be out of doors at night under the military occupation.

Pursuit by the Bloodhound.

Profiting by the darkness and the momentary confusion Howell dashed aside into the woods and headed in the direction of the river. He was not certain that he had been seen and when he broke out upon the bank he could hear no sounds of pursuit. Groping along for some distance he came to the edge of the city water front. He ran out upon a crumbling wharf

floating object. It was a canoe, a rough dug out of the rudest description, such as the negroes of the vicinity made by primitive processes. He cut the rope by which it was moored with his bowie knife, waded as far as he dared, pushing the craft before him, and then scrambled awkwardly aboard.

There was a small paddle in the bottom of the canoe, an inadequate strip of wood, and with this he tried to head across the stream. The current caught the dug-out and whirled it like a leaf, forcing it back into an eddy, where Howell strove helplessly, unable to direct his course or to get headway. At this instant the

thrown out. Still he paddled on.

The soldiers, following their dog, reached the verge of the stream in time to see the chase. The bloodhound was swimming after Howell, gaining on him perceptibly. Shots were fired at the retreating craft, but it was now so far down stream as to be a poor mark, and the pursuers on the land began to run along the bank, encouraging the pursuer in the water.

It was a strange, mad race, Howell, kneeling in the crazy canoe, labored as he could with his frail paddle, sometimes gaining toward the friendly side sometimes losing again as the swirl of the river drew

Tragedy of the Beleaguered Guardians of Allagash Dam.

WAY up in Northern Maine, sixty miles from the Canadian boundary, is Chase carry, the swiftest bit of water on the Allagash River, and the dread of log drivers as well as of all the sportsmen who pass that way. The big rocks that encumber the channel were once piled up in a great dam, the destruction of which forms one of the most exciting episodes in the history of the early years between the Yankee and Bluenose lumbermen.

In the fall of 1838 Joe Labree and his partner, Jack McCord, drifted into the settlement Suncook, out of money and looking for work. Times were not the same then as now, when a man can make \$3 or \$4 a day by paddling sportsmen from lake to lake, and summer was a dull time. About that time two Bangor men named Conners came down the west branch of the Penobscot, picking up men to work in the woods cutting logs at "a dollar a day till snow flies." Joe and Jack jumped at the chance, and soon were members of a crew of thirty men, poling their way up the sluggish Umbagogous on route to the head waters of the Allagash.

At the period of these events, all lumber cut on the Allagash or on any of its tributaries, had, of necessity, to be driven down that river and into New Brunswick, via St. John. To avoid sending so much good American lumber to New Brunswick mills for manufacture, the Conners brothers conceived the idea of building a large dam near the head waters of the Allagash, and thus, by flooding the small lakes lying south of Chamberlain Lake, form a continuous water force on the Allagash to Bangor.

The site of the proposed dam was on an elbow in the river, four miles above Chamberlain Lake. The men found plenty of suitable timber, and, favored by good weather, made rapid progress, so that when the first cold snap came the dam was nearly completed.

One day two visitors were in camp who had come up from the lower settlements of Canada. They had noticed the fall of water in the river caused by the dam and had come up to investigate. They said nothing, but it was very evident from their looks and actions that they were not at all pleased with the enterprise, which meant lower water on the Allagash and perhaps hard driving the following spring. Other Canadians came and looked over the dam, but the

Conners brothers paid no attention to them and the work was pushed on to completion.

Winter came on and the snow lay three feet deep on the ground, so that work had to be suspended, and the men got ready to return to the settlements. At the last moment the Conners brothers approached Joe Labree and his friend Jack McCord and made them a liberal offer to remain in camp all winter and keep watch over the dam. They said that they did not fear any trouble with the Canadians, but believed it best to be on the safe side. The offer was accepted, and when the crew went out McCord went with them, returning a week later with supplies and a large number of traps.

It was a pleasant and lazy life that Joe and Jack led for the next two months. Nothing was seen or heard from the down river men, game was plentiful and occasionally they would take a run up to Chamberlain Lake for a day's fishing, always returning with as much trout as they could carry. Five feet of snow lay in the woods and many a hunting trip the two watchers took to the neighboring mountains on their snowshoes. The interior of their cabin was filled with skins and heads that would bring them a handful of money when they should come out in the spring.

One evening, well along in March, McCord, who had been on a visit to the traps, returned with a troubled look. He had seen tracks on the river a few rods below the dam. Drifting snow had made it impossible to trace the tracks, but he was certain that they had not been made by himself or his clan. The two were much disturbed and stayed up late into the night discussing the matter. They were sure that a passing trapper could not have failed to see the cabin, and would hardly have passed without calling in. They came to the conclusion that whoever made the tracks was not on a friendly errand, but nothing was heard from the mysterious footprints, and in a few days the matter was forgotten.

On the afternoon of March 17 a violent snowstorm set in, accompanied by a high wind that whirled and tossed the snow so that it was impossible to see a rod away. All that night and the next day the snow fell, while the men in the cabin watched the drifts pile higher and higher against the dark wall of the forest across the river. At noon of the third day it cleared and a visit was paid to the nearest traps, which were found buried under tremendous drifts. It was intensely cold and the men were glad to get back to the roaring fire in the cabin.

Being very tired the partners turned in early that night. How long they slept is not known, but along toward midnight they were awakened by a glare of

light on the cabin walls. Springing from their beds and looking out they were astonished to see the other cabin near by and the head works of the great dam in flames, while by the light of the fire they could see two men, one crouched in the bushes only a few rods from their cabin with a rifle in his hands, the other standing by and holding a blazing torch.

Before they could get their clothes on the fire was eating through the walls of their cabin, and now a storm of bullets came flying through the chinks between the logs and in at the windows. The cabin burned so rapidly that to hesitate meant to be burned alive, while to venture out meant a run for life, half clothed, into the wilderness, for it was plain that the men at the dam were bent on murder. The occupants decided to go out, that being the only chance for life. McCord was in the lead. He had scarcely stepped to the door when a bullet struck him fair in the forehead and he fell dead in his tracks, while Labree, who was close behind, got a bullet in the left shoulder.

With one glance at his murdered partner, Labree sped on toward the woods, and as he looked back, at a distance of five hundred yards, he heard a terrible explosion. The earth and sky seemed to be lit up for miles around, as from a thousand electric lights. Then all became dark again, and Labree felt as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up. Finally lights appeared again, and he saw that the dam had been blown up. The place had changed so that he hardly recognized it as having been only a few minutes before the head of a one thousand horse power water system. The timber work had been shattered into splinters, and boulders weighing tons had been distributed far down the stream.

Joe Labree made the thirty miles to the nearest settlement, wading through the deep snow, tortured alike by the pain of the wound in his shoulder and the fear of being murdered at every step. He reached the cabin of John Gouger in an exhausted condition. He was kindly cared for, but when he told his fearful story they only shook their heads and looked sad. They thought him insane.

No one ever found out who blew up the Allagash dam or who was the assassin of Joe's partner, McCord, but it has been said that when Joe was telling his experience at a hotel in Andover, N. S. Brunswick, some time afterward, a man jumped from behind the counter and, catching him by the throat, yelled, "It was you we wanted, not the other fellow!" The next day a prominent man was missing from Andover, and it was supposed that he was one of the men who had been employed by the New Brunswick lumbermen to blow up the dam on the Allagash.