The Man Who "Doubled" For Field Marshal Montgomery

Living in a quiet little house on the South Coast is a sick, middle-aged actor called Clifton James, who once stood on the stage of the world itself—and played a part that every actor alive would have accepted with an excited, thumping heart.

Clifton James is the one-time lieutenant in the Royal Army Pay Corps who "doubled" for Field Marshal Montgomery in the vital hours before D-Day. He came into the news again recently when the Press reported that his application for a disability run-about chair had been turned down because he was not totally disabled, writes Leonard Samson in a recent issue of "Answers."

I went down to his home at Worthing to see him and hear again the fantastic story of how he hoodwinked the Germans into thinking that Monty was in Gibraltar at a time when he was really standing on the spring-board of the European invasion.

The orders given to James were probably the most vital and colourful ones ever put before an insignificant subaltern, and I wanted to find out something of the years that had led up to one of the greatest deceptions in history.

His First Battle

He was seventeen years old, a schoolboy, when the First World War broke out, but he lied about his age and a few months later found himself an infantry officer in the British trenches, just another shy, frightened boy suddenly flung into the thick of the Battle of the Somme.

He doesn't talk much about those days (although enemy gas may have contributed to his present illness) but he did mention one incident concerning a German soldier who surrendered with a grenade clasped in one hand. James woke up to find an M.O. picking lumps of metal out of his body. And the middle finger of his right hand was missing. That finger was to cause many a headache in Whitehall nearly thirty years later.

Two years after the Kaiser surrendered, James was still in hospital, but a few weeks later he had recovered sufficiently to try to pick up the threads of his pre-war life.

"My father had died when I was one-year old, and my guardian was no longer responsible for me, so I was pretty well alone," he told me. "I decided to become an actor. It wasn't easy, but I gradually began to make headway."

There were long tours up and down Wales with a company that had fifty plays in its repertoire—a different play each night; there were resident companies in England, and tours of the British Isles. The years passed, and James became a reliable, competent actor. He had a bad period of unemployment, when he tried his hand at selling pianos, but by the middle thirties he was making a success of his career.

Then came the Second World War.

"I joined the Army again, and this time I was put in the Royal Army Pay Corps," he said. "Being an actor, I organized entertainments and took part in troop shows."

One day Clifton James was called to London from his unit in Leicester to meet Colonel David Niven and chat about Army films. But their conversation was only a pretext.

A few minutes after meeting each other, Niven ushered him into another room where he was introduced to Colonel Lester.

"At least, that's what he called himself," James went on. He asked me to sign an extract from the Official Secrets Act, and then told me that I resembled General Montgomery so closely that, if I was willing, I might be called upon to 'double' for him. I was completely bewildered, but I said immediately that I'd do it."

The curtain was about to be rung up on the greatest role of Clifton James' career.

General Montgomery himself was at a secret rendezvous on the South Coast, ready to watch a full dress rehearsal of the invasion. It was also a rehearsal for James. A few days later he had been "demoted" to a sergeant of the Intelligence Corps, and posted to Montgomery's headquarters so that he could study the general at close range.

"If I'd Been A Spy"

"When the exercise ended," said James, "I travelled back to London by train. In the same compartment was a sailor who told me practically every detail of the invasion rehearsal I had just witnessed. If I'd been a spy the Germans would have had the whole set-up. Fortunately, it was just another little incident. Back at the War Office they told me that Monty was going to Scotland on a fishing trip. I was to go up there and see him privately so that I could catch the intonations and pitch of his voice.

"I had two or three fifteen-minute interviews with him, when we would talk about the theatre—he was deeply interested in it—or Australia, the country where I was born. I was terribly nervous, but by the time I returned to London I had begun to take on his character."

Awkward Questions

On Friday, May 26th, Lieutenant M. E. Clifton James became General B. L. Montgomery. He wore the famous beret and uniform, whitened his moustache and temples—and tied a cunningly contrived bandage on his right hand in place of the missing finger.

He drove through the streets of London to Northolt, and along the route he returned the salutes and waves of soldiers and civilians. At the airport, highranking officers of the Army and Air Force saw him into the plane which was to fly him to Gibraltar.

"My 'aide' was a brigadier who knew Monty intimately. He was travelling with me to keep at a distance anyone who might ask awkward questions; the general's own relatives, perhaps."

They Saluted

James laughed suddenly: "I wish I could have enjoyed the role I was playing, but the last words Colonel Lester said to me were 'Do your best, James. You've got the lives of two divisions on your shoulders.' I was terrified that I would make that one little slip that would give the game away."

As the plane approached Gibraltar, James prepared himself for the scene that he had rehearsed so many times back in London. He stepped out of the aircraft and returned the salutes of the officers standing at attention to greet him.

"I was driven to Government House," James continued, "to meet Sir Ralph Eastwood, the Governor of Gibraltar.

"He and Monty were very old friends so, of course, he knew all about the plan. We wandered into the garden together and went through a pre-arranged conversation. While we were talking, two men walked up the path and the Governor introduced me to them. Later I was told that one of them was a Spanish nobleman in the service of the Germans. It had all been worked out so that the enemy would know of my arrival on the Rock.

"And here's a thrilling sidelight on the whole thing. One hour after I arrived Madrid had the news. That same night Berlin knew all about Montgomery's visit to Gibraltar. The news reached Berlin through the most secret channels, but our own agents in the German capital were so well organized that they were able to pass the information back to London almost immediately."

All Over

From Gibraltar, James flew to Algiers, and there he was driven by one of General Maitland Wilson's aides to G.H.Q. It was a ride planned to display himself as Montgomery.

When the car drew to a halt and he entered the house, the last act was over. The curtain had rung down. But there was no applause from an appreciative audience. All that remained was for the actor to sit down quietly, smoke a cigarette, and remove his costume and make-up.

A few days later, after an inconspicuous stay in Cairo, Lieutenant Clifton James flew back to England. The anti-climax reached its lowest depths when his C.O. at Leicester threatened to put him on a charge for being absent without leave. A call to M.I.5 soon cleared matters up.

"That Fake"

The months dragged by and in June, 1946, he was demobbed. Still sworn to secrecy, James read an extract one day in Harry C. Butcher's book "My Three Years With Eisenhower," which stated that someone, with tongue in cheek, had reported to Montgomery at SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters American Expeditionary Force) that "the fake Montgomery is swaggering about half drunk in Gibraltar, smoking mammoth cigars like a chimney."

The information had never been refuted, so James contacted the War Office and was given permission by Viscount Montgomery to tell publicly the true version of his dramatic flight and impersonation.

Tanks Are Coming—Light tanks of the First Marine Division are loaded aboard an LSU in San Diego, Calif. The tanks are part of the equipment of the Korea-bound Leathernecks.

PEOPLE ARE READING THE ATLAS AGAIN - - -

A few days ago a lot of people made the same old journey to the bookshelf to take down the atlas and look up the location of unfamiliar places. This time is was Seoul, the Kum River and Taiwan. There may have been a time when a man could be content if he knew his own country and the towns in it, but not in the past twenty-five years. During those years after the First World War there was many a journey to the shelf for the maps of places far away. The first time, back in 1925, may have been for pleasant purposes. In those days maps showed chiefly where foreign friends might live or they mapped the route for a leisurely bicycle tour of England and Western Europe. They might even have showed the itineraries of Intourist journeys to the Soviet Union, in those days when tourists were welcome, in those days when Stalingrad was simply a two-hour stop in the evening on the boat ride down the Volga to Astrakhan. In the next years the atlas had other uses: to show the exact location of Locarno and the treaty signers, and a close study of what was called the Great Circle route, which Lindbergh and other pilots were flying.

In 1932 the atlas became something else—a means for quickly locating the latest horror. The Far Eastern section showed just where the Japanese were landing in their punitive expeditions on Chinese soil. Not long after, it was the maps of Germany and Austria, with Hitler in power and Dolfuss dead. In 1935 a man had to turn to a totally unfamiliar part of the atlas to search down the strange places named Addis Ababa, Adowa and Makale. There was one unhappy day, apart from wars and fighting in those years, when the atlas had to be used to locate Point Barrow, where Will Rogers had just died.

The atlas was off the shelf almost every day after 1937, to fill out the details in the maps the newspapers were publishing. They showed Seville, Granada, Cordoba and Guernica, the towns of the Spanish Civil War. They showed the exact course of the Yangtze, where the Japanese had hit an American gunboat. They showed the route through Austria along which Hitler's troops were marching. They located the small towns of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. A little later they marked the unhappy places of Hitler's first blitz in Western Poland, from Budgoszcs and Poznan to Zoppot and Westerplatte by Danzig.

Soon thereafter a man had to turn to the maps of the coastal cities of Norway, Bergen and Stavanger, of the roads through Holland, of the English Channel and particularly of its varying width at various places. The list of places searched for lengthened and spread wide, from Dunkerque and Dover to Coventry, Sidi Barrani and Tobruk. Then to another part of the atlas for Pearl Harbor and a detailed map of the Bataan Peninsula, and anyone could become impatient with an atlas for not showing everything in the most minute detail. An atlas was almost a necessity now, if only to know the distance between a man and the danger that could put an end to all he cared for.

The maps of Western Europe, of the North African coast, of the Far East, were always open then. The towns of Western Russia to the suburbs of Moscow, the routes through the Ukraine and to the Volga were searched out on the appropriate map. A man's eye climbed the ladder up the Pacific, from Darwin in Australia to New Guinea, Bougainville, the Solomons. Later the atlas came off the self for the maps of the North African and Italian coasts and then the towns of Normandy. Then Remagen, the Oder River, and Dongo, where Mussolini was shot. More recently it has been the towns of Indo-China and Burma, of northern Greece, the deserts of Palestine and the Bulgarian towns across from Yugoslavia. And now Korea.

This generation has had to know its geography, as a matter of life and death, probably better than any generation heretofore. To learn it from an atlas when some new trouble hits the headlines may be one way to learn it, but it is a grim way. Once an atlas used to be a pleasant book—a book that merely showed pleasant places to visit and new seas to sail.

—From The New York Times.

The SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

By Rev. R. Barclay Warren, B.A., B.D.

Ezra, Interpreter of God's Word
Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6, 8. 10, 18

Golden Text: This day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. —Neh. 8:10b.

Zerubbabel led the first band of captives from Babylon to Judea in 458 B.C. Seventy-eight years later, Ezra, a priest and a scribe, returned to teach the people. In today's lesson we find the people asking Ezra to give them the book of the law of Moses. They made a pulpit, and Ezra stood on it. He and his thirteen helpers "read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." This went on for a week.

It was a time of happiness. They were happy not merely because they were hearers of the word, but because they became doers of the word. They confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. Then they could worship. They made a covenant with God. They brought in the tithes and offerings which had been neglected. They observed the Sabbath. Nehemiah, the ruler, took a stern stand against those who persised in doing their work on the Sabbath and selling their wares. Likewise the practice of intermarrying with the neighboring heathen was publicly rebuked. That was a great turning to God.

If only our nation would turn to God's Word for guidance today! If there were more Ezra's whose main concern was to give the meaning of God's Word to the people; defense of their denominational doctrinal position being quite secondary. A national turning to God's Word would result in a revival of righteousness. May it soon come!

He Barbers Royalty

Benedetto Viccari is bald-headed, but that doesn't worry him. He has made his name looking after other people's hair.

Anyone can drop into his Mayfair hairdressing saloon, but his appointment book reads like Who's Who.

Thirty years ago he came to London with only a few shillings in his pocket. Today fifty-six-year-old Mr. Viccari is hairdresser to the world's kings, princes, diplomats and celebrities of every profession.

After the first world war he was just one of London's Italian barbers. He moved from saloon to saloon. It wasnt until the early thirties, when he was appointed to Claridge's, England's top-ranking hotel, that he achieved eminence.

His first famous client was the Aga Khan.

Some clients sign his autograph book, others read it. There is such a collection of well-know names scrawled across the pages that the illegible ones are almost ignored.

A quick glance reveals the signatures of ex-King Alphonso of Spain (who would send a Rolls Royce for Mr. Viccari to visit him to cut his hair), the Duke of Milford Haven, Lord Anson, the late Jan Masaryk, of Czechoslovakia, Sir John Barbirolli, Anton Walbrook, Anthony Asquith, several Indian princes, and so many Ministers of the Crown that the pages read like an imaginary House of Commons roll call spanning twenty years.

Mr. Viccari is a modest man and confesses in his Italian accent that he is bewildered by his own prestige.

"Some people have put it down to personality," he says, "but that's too easy an answer. All I know is that I enjoy hairdressing, it's an art to me, and every customer is someone different."

A Precise Haircut

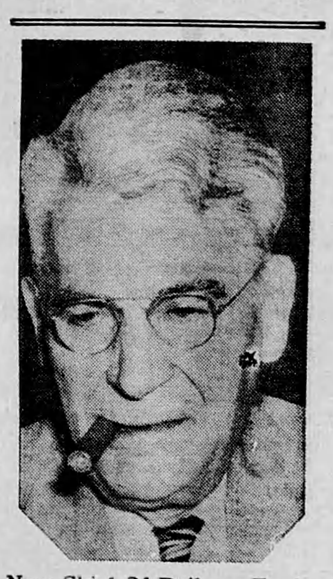
So determined is he to give the finest haircut possible that he defies a golden rule and sits down to his work.

"That way," he points out, "I can take my time and make sure of a precise haircut."

Mr. Viccari will readily chat about himself, but rarely about his clients. He knows that, as the confidante of kings, tact is his greatest asset.

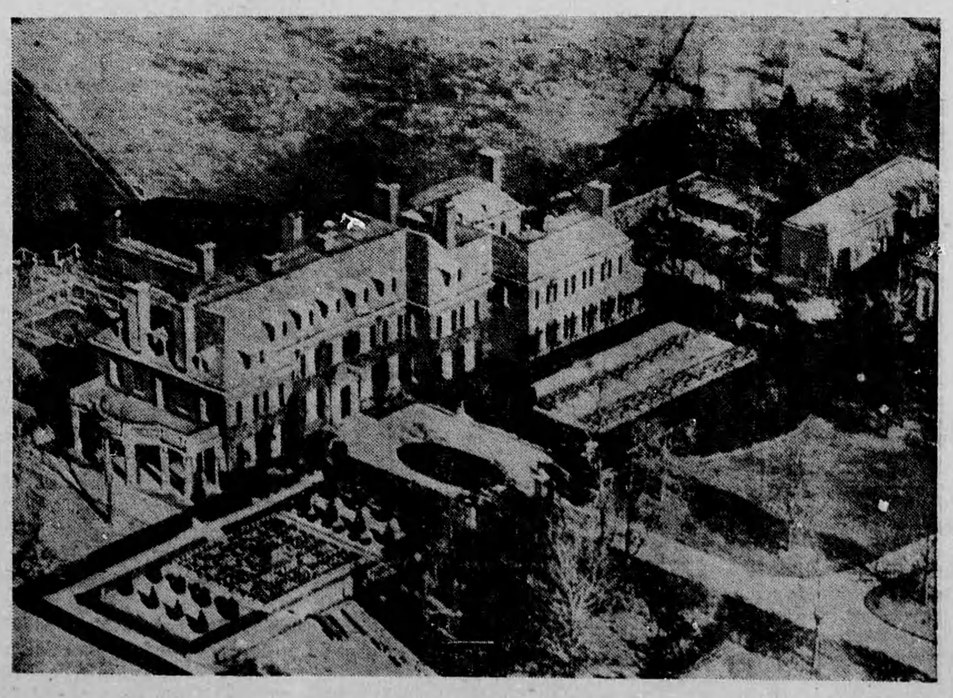
Question him further and he replies with a smile: "I'm still a working man. One day I'll retire—and maybe write the memoirs of a barber."

They should be worth reading.



New Chief Of Railway Engineers — James P. Shields of Cleveland, O., above, is the new grand chief engineer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Elected at the BLE convention, Shields succeeds Alvanley Johnston, who was chief executive of the union for 25 years.

Bucs Change Hands—Tom Johnson (left) and John Galbraith, new heads of the Pittsburgh Pirates, drop down to Forbes Field in Pittsburgh for a look-see. Galbraith will be president and Johnson secretary-treasurer. Frank McKinney sold out his interest in the National League's cellar team.



Seventy-One Beds! For How Many Reds?—Neighbors to the old J. P. Morgan mansion, above, on Mantinecock Point, Glen Cove, N. Y., are concerned about what their new neighbor, Leonid A. Morozov, Soviet diplomat at the UN, plans to do with the 71 folding beds recently moved into the mansion. If he planned to use the property for a summer resort, they say, he's violating zoning laws.