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At One Soldier's Grave.

How warm the day was, and how silent the way. I had ridden miles without meeting a human being. Yet it was a fertile and populous northern country I was passing through. Big, roomy farmhouses sat upon shaded hill tops, fair fields answered the sun's warm glances with full crops, and cool groves dotted the landscape here and there, under whose drooping branches the lazy kine stood panting.

I entered a bit of cool, damp wood, and let my horse move at his laziest pace. I enjoyed the shade, but I felt a loneliness and isolation the moment I was within it. Some woods are cheery and refreshing, however thick and impenetrable. This was moist, silent and gruesome. The sandy road was so damp that my horse's feet made no sound, and that added to the queer sense of solemnity I felt. I passed down a long, gently sloping hill into a still more gloomy hollow. Under a rude little bridge a struggling stream of surface water slowly mendered, with a melancholy sound, seeking the far-off sea.

The hill on the other side of the bridge was steeper than the one I had just descended. The top stretched out into a broad table land, nearly half a mile in length toward the north, though it shelved off west of the road about twenty yards into a diminutive valley. To the right, near the road, stood a disused, dilapidated Quaker meeting house. When I saw it I instantly understood the impressive loneliness of the wood. No places are so full of mysteriously sad influences as those wherein men and women have dwelt or met and then abandoned. The loneliest mountain side is not so lonely as a deserted house though it stand in sight of cheery homes. I am half afraid of ghosts in such places—not weird and chilling shapes exactly, but ghosts of the hopes, joys, sorrows and sins which were there born and which there died.

This rude old meeting house, unpainted, decaying and grim as a primitive law, made the gloomy wood still more desolate. An unfrequented road crosses another a few yards north of it; trees sighed about it; moss grew upon its rotted roof, and wild grass and briars clambered about its sunken doorstep. It told its mournful story without the aid of words. The plainly habited, honest people who met beneath its roof in the past had vanished from the earth, and their descendants were scattered or had departed from the faith of their fathers and belonged to the world's people. I stopped to look at it, held by a sad fascination.

A shrill whistle interrupted my reverie, and scattered the ghosts of the silent landscape. Turning to my left I saw a boy climbing a bit of shaky fence. The climbing was a self-imposing task, and was evidently indulged in for the sole purpose of adding interest to the occasion, whatever it was, since an unsteady gate swung open but a few feet further on. He wore an enormous straw hat, gayly decorated with grasses and roses, and carried in one hand a big basket, heaped full of flowers, old fashioned flowers, wild roses, May pinks, lilacs, blue bells, snow balls, peonies and honeysuckles. The other hand waved a brilliant half-grown flag, and on the end of the basket a very small flag had been clumsily sewn.

Altogether, this bright eyed infant had a festal appearance in strong contrast to the gloom and silence of the scene. He whistled a bar from the "Star-Spangled Banner," emphasizing it by waving the flag energetically. He seated himself on the top rail of the fence and eyed me with some interest, though pretending not to see me. His bare, brown feet beat time to the measure of the tune. He struck up, in a shrill treble:

> I am a patriot true, sir;
> Yes, I am; yes, I am!
> A patriot firm and true, sir;
> Yes, I am; yes, I am!

'I don't doubt it in the least,' I said, attempting to be sociable; 'indeed, you look it every inch.'

A grimace was his only answer. Still it was a friendly grimace. His dignity would not permit him to make my acquaintance too easily. I must make all the advances.

'Going to a picnic, are you not?' I asked, believing that the best way to open a conversation with him would be to take some interest in his affairs, though I detest that method as applied to myself.

'No—a strew,' he answered.

'A what?'

'A strew,' he replied, with a little annoyance in his voice, 'a Decoration day strew. Don't you know that this is the day to decorate soldiers' graves—the 30th of May?'

'I had forgotten, sir,' I answered humbly. 'But where are there any soldiers' graves? Not near here, surely.'

He turned like a bird on the old fence and pointed with the flag into a mass of brambles.

'Not there?'

'Yes, *there*. That's a graveyard—the graveyard that belongs to the old meeting house. Everybody that used to go to meeting there (pointing to the house) is in here now (pointing again toward the briars and weeds), so there are no more meetings.'

I looked at the graveyard with pitying interest. It was nothing but a square patch of brambles, and rank, dark weeds, inclosed by a broken and worm-eaten fence and surrounded by the thick and silent wood. Nothing could be more isolated from busy life, more completely forgotten by the world. No, not quite forgotten, for here was the brown-legged boy, with his flag and his flowers, his whistle and song.

'But soldiers are not buried here,' I said.

'One of them is,' the boy answered with an accent of pride and an additional wave of his flag. 'It's his grave that Missis Gilman is goin' to strew with these flowers, though he wasn't any relation of hers at all. He was a captain, and he has a marble headstone, the only one in the whole graveyard. His company put it up. It's getting a little old now, for he's been dead nearly twenty-four years—died 'most fourteen years before I was born.' He rattled this off with childlike eagerness, happy in being the first to tell a bit of something interesting to another.

'Were you in the war?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'So was my gran'father. I have the picture of a fight he was in. He was *killed*, too.' This with a special accent of pride. It was something to be killed, evidently, in his opinion.

Riding close to the old fence I looked over into the neglected place of the dead and saw the edge of a marble headstone and beside it the dark folds of a woman's gown.

'Come in and see this soldier's grave,' said the boy, glad of a new interest. I hesitated. The occasion seemed too sacred for the intrusion of a stranger; but he insisted so warmly that I left my horse and followed him into the graveyard. His simple, but not undignified introduction made an apology to the lady unnecessary.

'Misses Wilson,' he said, gallantly taking off his flower-trimmed hat, 'this gentleman was in the war, and I've asked him in to help put the flowers on Capt. Rathbone's grave.'

We were on the ground of common sympathy at once. This woman was no longer young, but she was beautiful with the beauty of a spirit that had long dwelt on calm heights. She was of the past, scarcely seeming to belong to the present at all. Her soft black silk and its laces, and even her face, were of a fashion not new. She was an old school-lady, with the gentle dignity and majesty of manner that indicate the old-school training.

'This is not my son's grave,' she said, 'but that of his dearest friend, and I am the only one left here who knew him or cares to lay a flower on the earth that covers him.'

I bent to read the inscription on the fast-dimming headstone:

> To the memory
> of
> CAPTAIN WILBUR RATHBONE,
> A true friend and brave soldier.
> This stone is raised by Co. G. —th Regiment,
> — Vol. I., which he commanded.

The grave had been carefully tended. Its rounded outlines and fresh, closely trimmed sod made of it a green island in a lake of disorder and neglect. The pale old lady knelt down and began to pick the flowers from the basket and reverently lay them upon the grave. The boy, big eyed and silent, came softly up and planted his flag at its head.

'Wilbur Rathbone was my son's closest friend,' continued the old lady, in a soft, sweet voice. 'They were babies together, school-fellows, comrades and friends. The home of each was as much the others as his own. They spent almost every hour of their time together for twenty years. They grew alike in looks and manners, though they were totally unlike in character. Even their names resembled each other. My boy was called Willis. He was rash, impetuous, quick to anger and not easy to control. Wilbur was brave but gentle, given to quiet ways and of few words. He loved music better than merrymaking, and dogs, horses and birds better than the society of his fellows. I fancy I can still hear the piano speak under his fingers when I sit silent and alone in my now childless and almost empty house. And when the quiet of evening comes I sometimes close my eyes, to blot out of my memory a quarter of a century, and hear the notes from his violin float over the hills. His mother and father, my good neighbors, lived over there in the house whose chimneys you can just see from here,' and she pointed through a break in the wood. 'They are long since dead, and lie here by the side of their son. They were not members of the Society of Friends that met in this little house, but their parents had been, and when they died there was, after all, no spot of ground in which to bury them more sacred than this, though it is so desolate—so very, very desolate.

'But the boys! They were never separated until a few months before the war broke out. My son grew restless and talked of going out into the world and doing great things. We held him here, his father and I, foolish souls that we were, feeling that we could not let him go; for to go once meant really to go for ever. You know that when birds once try their wings they never go back to the nest. And we had only one other child, our girl, our Katie. At last the pressure upon his restless spirit rasped his ever quick temper, and he quarreled with his father, left us in the night without a word.'

She rose, turned her face away, and stood so long silent that I thought she meant to say no more.

But she went on presently, stooping down and picking up a flower from the soldier's grave. 'Never before had I a trial like that. His father had been stern with him, I know, but he loved him, and I loved them both, and now anger raged in their hearts toward each other. One was going where I could not help him, and the other lugged his wrath in silence at home.

'Oh, the agony of those days! One by one they went by without bringing a word from my boy. The hours sat upon my heart like mountains. The disgrace of it almost killed us. To think that our son—our only son, whom we so loved—had fled from his home like a thief in the night, and was wandering, we knew not where.'

'At last Wilbur came to me one day, bringing a letter from Willis, which he had sent within one to him. He wrote humbly to me, begging me to forgive his unceremonious departure and assuring me again and again of his love, but said not a word of his father. His heart was still full of anger toward him, I could see. I have that letter yet. I have read it a thousand times. It was the last line I ever had from his hand.

'He was in Georgia. Why he went South I do not yet understand. Perhaps it was accident; perhaps it was destiny. Even then there were rumors of war, and in a short time it burst upon the country in all its terror and horror. These quiet hills echoed the sounds of the bugle and the drum from morning till night. Down in the town companies were forming and regiments waited to be ordered to the front. Wilbur Rathbone commanded a company, and waited in camp for an order to depart. Before he left the news came one day that our Willis had joined the Confederate army; that he was captain of a company under Longstreet. I tried to doubt that awful story. I would not believe it—I could not. That he had left us in anger was sorrow and disgrace enough; to know that he was in arms against his and our country was too great an affliction to be calmly borne. His father raved like a madman, and forbade us to speak of Willis in his presence.

'I saw Wilbur march away with a heart heavier than stone. If my boy had only been with him, it seemed to me I could have laughed from joy. But now, these two whose lives had been spent in brotherly companionship were in arms against each other. The roll of the drums sounded in my ears day after day and would not die out even after every soldier had been sent on to the south. I awoke night after night from dreams of battles in which I saw my Willis wounded and dying. Sometimes I called his name in my sleep and his father's groans of anguish would wake me.

'When the body of Wilbur Rathbone was sent home, I envied his mother her sorrow. He had died for his country—died for freedom. I stood dry-eyed by his grave, loving him as a son, and feeling that my own sorrow was greater than death. My daughter died a few months later. This affliction we bore unmurmuringly; but that other, that unspeakable sorrow, grieved us unceasingly.

'At last I, too, grew stern and unrelenting toward my son, I banished him from my thoughts. I drove his memory from my heart. I had no forgiveness for him. And so the years went on—those awful years of the war when the whole country mourned and suffered. At last it was over. Peace came and the country bound up its wounds and began to live again. Nearly a year later we learned that Willis had been killed while fighting at Chickamauga. His father's heart softened then. He wept and murmured affectionate excuses for him. But I—I felt relieved to know that I should never see his face again. They talk about the deathless tenderness of the mother's heart, but mine had its day of hardness. Always this thought stung me; I, a patriot, the daughter of patriots, was the mother of a son who had defied his parents and fought against his country.

'Three years later my husband died, and I was left alone. He spoke of Willis often in the last days of his life. But I was silent.

Not till long, long after did I find in my heart forgiveness for my erring son. I realized at last that I had no right to judge him; that if he erred perhaps I was to blame. I know now that the passions, sorrows and evils of life became as nothing in the sweep of time. He was buried in the trenches of Chickamauga. I cannot lay a flower on his grave, so I come on the day they honor soldiers and lay my tributes on the earth that covers the body of Wilbur, his best beloved friend. Somehow I feel that Willis understands and knows that in my heart are flowers of affection for him. They were both dear to me—very dear to me.

'Yes, he surely understands. I have long felt that, and have long ceased to grieve. Both my boys are safe—safe and dead. It is well with them.'

She ceased to speak, and stood with her hand resting on the soldier's headstone, her eyes seeing visions of the past, and nothing of the present. The boy sat in the grass at the foot of the grave, with tears dripping down his brown cheeks. The tale had touched him, little as he could understand the deep tragedy of it. And I heard again the clash and thunder of war, saw the blazing fires of battle and felt, in a rush of memory, the fierce fever of those vanished days of carnage.

The boy followed me out to the roadside. 'Do you think,' he said, earnestly, as I mounted my horse, do you think there will be another war here in my time?'

'I think not; I hope not,' I answered.

He looked disappointed. 'I want to fight,' he said, eagerly; 'for I have a sword that was my grandfather's.'

I rode away from that lonesome spot full of sad thought. All contentions, strife and anger seemed so needless; all suffering so gratuitous. Yet, thank God, peace and rest always come at last.

EBBON OLIVER.

He Sketched with His Mouth.

Percy W. Hastings, of Lunenburg, Mass., who won fame as an artist, although completely paralyzed below the neck, is dead. He attended school at Ashburnham six years ago, where he fell from a trapeze, striking upon his back. It was two months before he could be removed to his father's house. Since the accident on June 3, 1880, Percy Hastings has had no use of his body below the neck, as a result of the fracture of the third or fourth vertebrae. To amuse himself, Percy learned to hold the pen in his mouth. He soon succeeded in writing a good business hand. Sketching was next in order. An easel was attached to his reclining chair and placed but a few inches from his face. In sketching Percy met with such signal success that he tried painting in water colors and made good progress. An attendant would prepare his paints and place the brush in Percy's mouth. The principal work has been the painting of flowers from nature. The work has been on exhibition many times and has received much praise. The general size of the paintings has been about six by six, the extent of the area that could be covered by the motion of the head. Of these paintings; many readily sold for from $3 to $5 each. Many persons are on record as having been enabled to produce almost phenomenal results by the use of the mouth, but only with the use of other portions of the body. Lunenburg's young artist is the first illustration of what can be accomplished by the mouth alone.

Wit Saved Him.

A brigade was encamped near Charleston, Va., says Allen F. Hall, in the Grand Army Sentinel, and a guard had been detailed to protect the property of the citizens in the neighborhood and strict orders given against foraging or taking anything without paying for it. The colonel of one of the regiments was out one day with his staff and all of a sudden he came upon a private of his regiment with a sheep on his back, evidently just killed. He rode up to the soldier and asked him: 'Where did you get that sheep?'

He answered: 'Up here in the field.'

'Did you buy him?'

'No, sir; I just killed him, so.'

'Why, don't you know that strict orders have been issued against doing anything like that?'

'Yes, sir, I know it, and will tell you how it was. I was going along the road whistling the 'Star Spangled Banner,' and this sheep held up his head and looked straight at me, and said, 'ba-a, ba-a,' and sir, I up and killed him, as I won't allow anything to say 'ba-a,' at me when I'm singing or whistling the 'Star Spangled Banner.'

It is needless to say the colonel told him to go ahead. The fellow's wit saved him that time.

Making a Man Orthodox.

An officer in the Russian army, of distinguished family, was striken down with a fever while serving in Siberia. He finally became delirious, and the doctors pronounced the case hopeless. Nobody happened to know that he was a member of the Lutheran church, and the priest sent for was orthodox. That priest, in spite of the explict injunction of his church, administered the sacrament to a man who was out of his mind, and then performed the rite of extreme unction. A few hours afterward the crisis of the fever passed over and the patient gave evident signs of recovery. The priest at once proclaimed to the neighborhood that, with God's help, he had wrought a miracle. Be that as it may, the officer steadily improved in health, and after some weeks was strong enough to start for St Petersburg.

Now mark what followed. In going one day into the Protestant church, of which he had long been a member, he was greeted by his pastor that he would leave the church and not bring upon him the penalties which fell upon every heterdox preacher who ministered to the orthodox. On demanding in astonishment, an explanation, he was informed that the account of his miraculous cure had been sent to the Synod, which had warned his former Lutheran pastor that the man was henceforth orthodox. In vain he protested that he had always been a member of the Lutheran Church, that he had never voluntarily altered his faith, that the sacrament and extreme unction had been administered to him when he was unconscious. It made no difference—orthodox he must be for the future; and a direct appeal to the Czar only elicited the reply that his majesty could not interfere with general regulations of the Ecclesiastical Synod, which had already received his imperial action. With such power as this wielded by the church, it ceases to be a wonder that the Russian heterdox sects have never united in a common movement. Far more wonderful is it that dissent has ever been able for one moment to assert itself.

Failed and Succeeded.

Men admit that no man is equally great in all things. Yet they often do see that a man's failure in one line of work is no reason why he may not succeed in a different calling.

An incident which occurred some years ago in a London linen store illustrates this blindness.

A young man, whose bluntness was such that he was of no use as a salesman, was told that he did not suit and must go. Seeking the head of the house the youth said:

'Don't turn me away; I am good for something.'

'You are good for nothing as salesman,' replied the principal.

'I am sure I can be useful,' continued the youth.

'How? Tell me how?'

'I don't know, sir; I don't know.'

'Nor do I,' said the principal, laughing at the boy's eagerness and ignorance.

'Don't put me away,' continued the youth; 'try me at something else. I know I can't sell, but I can make myself useful somehow; I know I can.'

Moved by his earnestness the principal placed him in his counting-room. Immediately his aptitude for figures showed itself. In a few years he became the head cashier of the concern. Throughout the country he was known as an eminent accountant.

What Made Him Feel so Bad.

'John, do you remember coming home last night and asking me to throw you an assorted lot of key holes out of the window, so that you might find one large and steady enough to get your latchkey in?'

'Yes dear.'

'And you remember the night before how you asked me to come down and hold the stone steps still enough for you to get up on?'

'Yes, dear.'

'And the night before that how you tried to jump into the bed as it passed your corner of the room?'

'Yes, dear.'

'And still another night when you carefully explained to me that no one was intoxicated as long as he could lie down without holding on, and then attempted to go to bed on a perpendicular wall?'

'Yes, dear.'

'John, do you realize that you have come home, sober but two nights in the past week?'

'Have I, dear?'

'That's all; and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, too. The idea of a man of your age—But, John, why, you're crying. There, there, dear, I didn't mean it. Don't cry, dear. You did come home sober two nights.'

'Yes, that's what makes me feel so bad.'

And then the meeting adjourned.

Four Children Perrish in a Burning Building.

The Mother, With Her Babe in Her Arms, Leaps Through a Window and is Unhurt.

Akron, O., May 19.—The little home of Mrs. Mooney, a widow, about 3 miles north of Akron, was burned to the ground shortly before last midnight and four of her children, the oldest 12 and the youngest 4 years, perished in the flames. Mrs. Mooney awoke in the night to find herself choking with smoke and snatching up her baby of 2 years, told the other little ones who were almost stifled to follow her. Mrs. Mooney sprang out of the window with the baby in her arms and landed almost unhurt, the baby also receiving but slight injuries. Lawrence Mooney, aged 60, a brother-in-law of Mrs. Mooney, was awakened by the children's cries and rushed out of the house only to be told by the frantic mother that her four little ones were in the burning building. Both mother and uncle rushed into flames time and again, but were beaten back. Mr. Mooney at length falling exhausted and terribly burned while the flesh on his hand hung in shreds. It took but a few minutes longer for the crackling flames to consume the little building and this morning the charred ones were found in the ruins. Lawrence Mooney's injuries may prove fatal and Mrs. Mooney and her two grown daughters living in this city are wild with grief. The $900 insurance and the little patch of ground is all that is left to the stricken mother. The fire caught from an overheated stove.

Best Seasons for Planting.

How late we can sow or plant with a reasonable prospect of getting a crop, depends very much on the season, and somewhat on the character of the soil. We can plant an early variety of potatoes as late as the middle of June. But you will, as a rule, get a far better crop if planted in May. I have had good corn planted the first week in June. Rutabagas have done well sown the 4th of July. Mangold wurzels will produce a moderate crop sown any time in June, but if you want a big crop, sow in May. I have had a very profitable crop of beans planted the middle of June. But of course we plant earlier if we can get time to do the work. We plant with a drill in rows thirty inches apart and drop about six beans in hills fifteen inches apart in the row. The quantity of seed required per acre, depends on the size of the beans. The white Boston Marrow beans require a bushel per acre. Pea beans, three pecks per acre. If you drill in the seed right along the row, dropping the beans about an inch apart, you require about twice the quantity of seed. Some of our bean growers think they get enough larger crops to more than pay for the extra seed, and for the extra work in pulling the crop.—*American Agriculturist for May.*

The Secret Out.

'Oh I've just made the funniest discovery,' said Mrs. Minks. 'You know my husband never would tell me what he did at the secret society he is a member of.'

'Yes; mine won't, either,' returned Mrs Finks, sorrowfully.

'Well, yesterday a big can of alcohol came addressed to him for the lodge. He is a past grand something or other and takes care of things. Well, I noticed him going up-stairs with some of the alcohol, and when he got in to his room I peeped through the keyhole, and what do you think I saw? He had the alcohol lamp, and was putting salt on the wick and it made the awfullest ghastliest kind of a light. I was positively scared out of my wits, he looked so much like a goblin. I suppose they do plant at their initiations. I always thought they had some horribly ghastly performance.'

'Did you ever!' exclaimed Mrs. Finks, in a horrified tone. 'Well, I might have known they used alcohol at those secret meetings, for my husband always comes home smelling dreadfully strong of it.'

Giving a Housewife Points.

A careful housewife upon entering her kitchen said to her colored cook:

"Great goodness, Jane, you must be more careful. You are not clean enough in your cooking."

"Lady," replied the cook, as she took up a piece of beef that had fallen on the floor, "I see that yer's gwine ter act foolish wid me. Ain't yer got nuthin' ter do 'cept ter fool round our heah?"

"It's my business to come out here occasionally."

"All right den, hab it yer own way, but I wanter say one thing: If yer wants ter 'njoy yerse'f at de table an' eat wid er 'comin' apertite, yer'd better stay outen dis kitchen. Yas," she added, as she wiped a dish with a dirty rag, "yer'd better not nose roun' heah, for cookin' is er business wid me, an' when er pusson is 'gaged in business, foolishness is awful troublesome,"