

## Tribute to the Brave



## MAY AGAIN

Ornex Fred Sweet

LILACS and snowballs and peonies nodded in the yard between the sagging gate and the dilapidated porch. On the porch sat an old man leaning on his cane. Past the gate swept a boy on roller skates.

With an acrobatic twirl, the boy swung away from the walk, whisked through the gate and came to a stop in front of the old man on the porch.

"You'll be picking the flowers in the morning," the boy greeted with enthusiasm. "You always do. And you'll be hanging your flag out on the porch. Tomorrow—"

"Yes, tomorrow is Decoration day," mused the old man.

"I don't know whether mother'll let me march or not," went on the boy. "She hates to have me stand out in the hot so long."

He balanced himself on the skates and glanced over his shoulder toward the big house across the street.

"Standing in the hot sun wouldn't stop me," the old man answered as if speaking to some one far off, "but these legs of mine—I said last year it was my last. I was all played out before we got to the cemetery."

The boy looked at the old man, his hands on his hips, his elbows crooked.

"I think I'll march anyhow," he concluded suddenly. "I think it must have been great to have been a soldier. You can remember all those battles you were in and how you marched behind the flag. You can remember what you did for your country."

The old man smiled.

"We're old timers now, Tommy—worn out old timers with nothing much but those memories. And the weaker we get in the flesh and bones the stronger those old memories come back. Ed Howse, he's a worthless old crab in a way, but he wears the little bronze button on the lapel of his coat, and—well, I just can't tell you how I feel toward him. He was with a regiment way off in another part of the country from me, but I know he went through it, too, or he wouldn't be wearing the little bronze button. Tomorrow he'll be marching up to the cemetery back of the band with the look in his eyes that defies the world to say he ain't a boy again. He will be a boy again. He'll be back again as he was when he fought for the flag!"

The boy seated himself on the porch steps.

"I've studied about it all in school," he puzzled, "but it all seems so long ago. I don't suppose there'll be any more wars."

"No," agreed the old man. "When we fought to save the Union I guess it finished up things pretty well so far as this country is concerned. And the old fellows are dropping off so fast there won't be any of 'em to march out to the cemetery soon. They'll

all be sleeping out there. When you think of 'em, you'll only remember the years when they offered themselves to a great big, good cause and you'll forget the faults they had."

The boy's face clouded with thought.

"If I come over early in the morning," he asked, "will you let me have the flowers you've always carried up there yourself? I'll see that they get to a flag-marked grave."

"You bet I will," smiled the old man. "I'll cut 'em for you in the morning. They bloom this way just for Decoration day. You can't tell me that they don't know that they're for soldier graves."

Lilacs and snowballs and peonies nodded between the sagging gate and the dilapidated porch. On the porch sat an old man leaning on his cane, and at the gate approached a buoyant youth in a belted coat, tight-fitting trousers and a long-peaked cap.

"Good morning!"

The old man strained his eyes.

"Good morning, Tommy. I was looking for you."

"You've got out the old flag on the porch," the youth smiled. "You haven't



"You'll Be Picking the Flowers in the Morning."

forgotten that it's Decoration day, but I guess I'll have to cut the flowers myself this morning."

The old man shook his head.

"Nope, I'll cut 'em for you," he insisted. "I've done it these ten years that you've come along. I was just waiting for a little—a little breath. You're getting to be a big fellow, Tommy."

The youth began to help the old man down the path.

"You were wrong about wars being at an end," he said finally. "Things are pretty lively in the old country."

"Yes, yes, over there," admitted the old man. "I don't know where our muzzie loaders would come in with those machine guns and airplanes and gas. But we're clear on this side of the water. They'll be mighty careful not to tread on our rights. The old flag never touched the ground and the Germans know it. They'll be careful not to rife Uncle Sam."

"I guess you're right," the youth responded with tightened lips. "They know the old flag'll never touch the ground, or they better know it. You sit down now and take it easy. The procession's almost here, I'll just follow along. I'm out of school now, but I'll see that the flowers get where they belong."

Lilacs and snowballs and peonies nodded in the yard between the sagging gate and the dilapidated porch. On the porch sat an old man leaning on his cane.

In a few days now the flag would flutter from the porch. The sky would seem a bluer blue, the birds sing with peculiar sweetness. Heaven would seem pretty close to earth. It would be Decoration day!

The morning breeze would catch the folds of the flag on the porch and cause the red, white, and blue to sparkle anew in the sunshine.

The music of the band would grow fainter. Every year it had been the same. The robins chirping in the evergreens and the insects setting up a chorus in the close-cut blue grass of the cemetery with its quiet suddenly invaded by the town. The voices of the quartet carried off over the prairie by the breeze. The address. The school children heaping their blood-roots and violets and honeysuckles above the flag-marked graves.

Ed Howse had limped in at the sagging gate and was making his way as best he could up the path to the porch. Ed pushed back his slouch felt hat and with an effort seated himself below the old man leaning on his cane.

"Well, it'll be Decoration day in a few days," he panted. "I'm going to try to make the march—once more."

The old man on the porch nodded.

"My hearin's gettin' pretty bad. I don't suppose I'll be able to hear much that the speaker says," Ed went on. "I won't know whether he's talkin' about the way we held our ground at Gettysburg or that fight around Amiens to hold back Hindenburg. D—n those Huns, do they think they can spoil all us old fellows fought for?"

"The old flag never touched the ground," answered the old man.

"If I was fifty years younger," quavered Ed.

"We've got 'em fifty years younger, don't worry," nodded the old man grimly. "The old flag'll never touch the ground."

"Never saw your lilacs look finer," Ed remarked. "Pears as if they looked nicer than I ever see 'em."

The man leaning on the cane cleared his throat. He glanced toward the gate—the gate where—

"They ain't going to be cut this year," he said finally. "They know he'll never come after 'em again. Those lilacs and snowballs and peonies have got to carry their fragrance a long way on Decoration day this

year. They know what they've bloomed for every May. They know this year better than ever. The breeze that nods 'em is going to do its part. There's nothing going to stop their fragrance being carried clear across the land we love, across the ocean we're going to keep free, over to his grave 'somewhere in France.'—Chicago Tribune

"Somewhere in France."

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A man either gives according to his means or his meanness.

## THAT CHANGE IN WOMAN'S LIFE

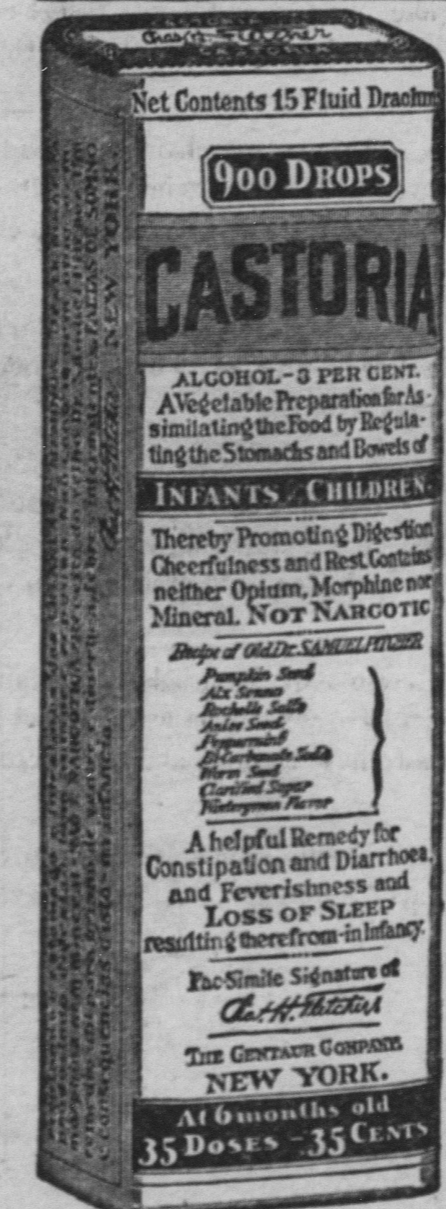
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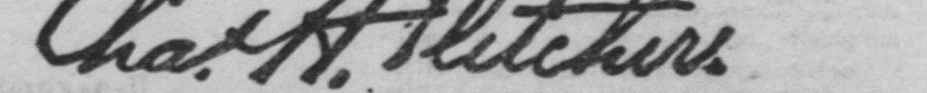


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