

The Denison Review

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DENISON, IOWA.

A SCOOP SUPPRESSED.

By William Forster Brown.

A DOOR at the end of the dingy room swung open a foot, and a small, freckled face topped by a halo of tousled red hair appeared in the aperture. "Hello, McCracken?" vociferated the owner, shrilly, searching the room with his eyes. "Oh, I say, Mac, Crab wants you upstairs—right on."

A tall man bending over the edge of the battered table rose hastily, shying a roll of typewritten copy into the mouth of a yawning brass tube set in the wall opposite. "All right, Mickey," he said, cheerfully, "tell him I'm coming."

"Wonder what the old man wants?" soliloquized the reporter, as he hurriedly mounted the rickety stairs, for when Crabtree Nichols, generalissimo and editor-in-chief of the "Telegram" forces, condescended to dispatch his private office-boy after a reporter it was well for the wanted individual to move with speed. "It must be a special assignment of some sort. I hope to goodness it hasn't anything to do with the Koshier meat riots; two days and a night of that business is about enough for James McCracken, Esq. Harris swore this morning that if I sent in any more copy full of Keifferman and Feinklestein, he'd sue me for the e and i type he wore out, anyhow," turning the knob of the office door, "here's hoping it's something out of the rut."

The thin, nervous face of Crabtree Nichols, clearcut and businesslike as a steel wedge, peered over the edge of a pyramid of litter as the reporter halted by the side of the desk. "Oh—er—you, McCracken?" he said, briefly, "Sit down." McCracken complied. "Forster's sprained his knee," went on the editor, rapidly. "He's just phoned me from the Emergency. You'll have to go down to Clayton Point and do the launching. Of course, that isn't much of a trick by itself, any 'cub' on the staff could do it, and I shouldn't have sent you for it that was all; but it isn't. Miss Grover, the mayor's daughter, is to do the christening—she's a grandniece or something of the Capt. Grover the boat's named for—and her father is going to make a speech at the luncheon afterward. I fixed it for Forster to have a place on the staging when Miss Grover cracked the bottle. Grover will be there, too. Here's Forster's card for the whole business, lunch and all. I've written your name in place of his."

"What you are to do—the whole thing in a nutshell—is to cultivate Grover. See if by hook or crook you can get him to drop some hint as to what he is going to do about the South Side Railroad franchise. He's close-mouthed, but he is mighty anxious for re-election, and if a clever man that knows his business can't get something out of him this afternoon it'll be a wonder."

"With all the excitement, cheers, the honor paid his daughter, and a chance to pose for votes in his speech, Grover'll be in a mood to loosen up, if he ever is. There'll be plenty of champagne, too, to help things along. If you hustle you can get the 1:40 train and be in the yard at 2:30. That's all."

For once opportunity had deigned to dangle her forelock within reach of his fingers; not for a second did he fail to recognize that fact. Clayton politics had been on the boil for six weeks over the franchise bill, and the key of the situation lay in the mayor's hands. So far John Grover had baffled interviewers and puzzled even the prominent men in his own party by a sphinx-like refusal to commit himself as to whether or not he would sign the bill if it passed. The paper that could discount his final action would make its rivals "sit up."

McCracken had been in love with Molly Grover for more than a year—ever since he had made her acquaintance during a never-to-be-forgotten afternoon on the Clayton golf-links—and while he was not without stray but tangible proof that the young lady in question took an interest of sorts in his welfare, he realized well enough that between the daughter of John Grover—a rich and rising politician with an unbounded ambition—and a more or less obscure reporter drugging on a daily newspaper there was a great (social) gulf fixed; still, when one is young hope is a factor that refuses to be eliminated, and it is something to spend even a meager three hours in the immediate vicinity of the "only girl in the world," although the future holds forth no prospect of orange-blossoms and ultimate possession. McCracken sauntered into the yard with his heart thumping joyously, and whistling to himself "When the Girl You Love, Loves You."

With the launching this story has nothing to do save to chronicle the fact that it was much like other launchings and went off smoothly, and that the mayor, his pride in his handsome daughter open and manifest, made the speech of his life, was roundly applauded, and departed cityward in high spirits, carrying with him intact the secret that the discomfited McCracken, despite adroit questions and Machiavellian leads, had failed to penetrate.

Even the memory of five warm little fingers laying in his palm for a longer period than etiquette demanded failed

to altogether dispel the gloom that wrapped the reporter's soul when he boarded the train for the run in. The thought of standing before "Crab" Nichols and confessing himself beaten cut McCracken to the quick. "I know what he'll say to himself," the reporter thought, ruefully. "I might have known nobody but Forster could have—"

"Papers, evening papers!" shouted the train-boy, breaking in on his gloomy thoughts. "All about the franchise bill! Extra telegram!"

McCracken bought a paper and opened it. "By Jove!" he ejaculated, as his eye caught the "scare" headline, "the bill passed this afternoon. Grover'll have to come out of his shell now, and do one thing or the other—I'd give my chance of a raise to know which. Wouldn't it be a scoop for the morning edition?" The reporter glanced idly down the text of the bill, which was printed without abridgment. The title read, "An ordinance granting the South Side Electric Railroad company rights of franchise on certain streets in the city of Clayton, Mass."

The general tenor of the bill was familiar enough to McCracken, and he scanned the headings of the first half dozen clauses without special interest. The measure had been introduced by the local trolley-line for the purpose of having its original franchise extended, chiefly to frustrate the designs of a certain powerful outside railway corporation desirous of pushing its lines through Clayton. The local road had promised three-cent fares within city limits if the bill passed.

At the sixth clause McCracken's gaze was suddenly arrested and he stared at the printed page as if hypnotized. The clause said: "And the aforesaid petitioning company shall likewise be granted the exclusive right of crossing North river by means of Main street, Stone or other bridges now or hereafter to be constructed, and of laying tracks in such streets of South Clayton as it may deem expedient."

"Great Scott!" he muttered, "can it be possible that the city council passed the bill with this clause in it and never guessed what it meant? Some of them must have realized—wonder how much it cost the railroad to shut their mouths?"

The reporter's thoughts flew instinctively to the "Telegram." "I've got a scoop this time that lays over anything Forster ever did," he thought, jubilantly. "If the train's on time maybe I can get it into to-night's regular edition. By Jove!" at a sudden thought, "if Grover signs the bill the 'Telegram' can make it hot for him at the next election. Crab can wait until the mayor's renominated—and there isn't much doubt but what he will be—and then spring this 'clause six' business. Grover couldn't make the public believe he hadn't known about it in the first place—and winked at the steal—in a thousand years; he'd go to the political graveyard on the fly, for people wouldn't stand for a man that let a thing like that get by him, whether he was innocent or not."

"Grover's square, though, if he is a politician," thought the reporter, with growing compunction, "and he's got a record 'way ahead of most of them. It would be a confounded shame if he was thrown down. I'll bet money he doesn't suspect for a second that the franchise bill isn't all straight." All at once temptation, mighty, formidable, assailed McCracken and the paper slipped unheeded from his fingers. "Suppose, instead of giving this away, I go to the mayor, and if he has decided to sign the bill tell him," he argued. "Maybe he won't thank me, but he'll veto the bill for sure, and when he comes out with his reasons there won't be anything in Clayton too good for him—he will be morally sure of a second term."

Staring from the window of the car at the lights whizzing past in the gathering darkness, the reporter fought a short, sharp battle with himself. If he went to the mayor, good-by to his scoop and all chances of glory and a possible "raise;" on the other hand loomed invitingly the probable gratitude of a "coming" influential politician—and Molly Grover. Duty as represented by the "Telegram" fought a good fight, but the odds were too great; with the grinding of the brake-shoes McCracken's mind was made up, and with characteristic promptness the reporter alighted on the platform before the train had come to a standstill, colared the first hackman his eye fell on and fairly dragged him through the side door of the station toward his waiting hack.

"22 Sewall avenue," McCracken announced, briefly. "Hurry now—I've got to see the mayor on important business and time is money." Flashing a greenback before the gaze of the astonished driver, the reporter dived through the door of the carriage and the nearly simultaneous forward jerk of the hack thumped him over on the seat.

"If I don't catch Grover in, or he's signed the bill, it's all off," he thought, with inward misgiving; "and it just would have made a howling sensation in the evening edition—but it's too late for that, anyhow."

Mayor John Grover greeted McCracken cordially and extended his hand with the "you're-the-one-person-in-the-world-I-wanted-to-see" air that had made him famous. "I'm glad to see you newspaper boys at any time," he said, laughing, waving aside his visitor's apology for interrupting his dinner. "I always intend to stand in with the press, you know. I'll wager a hat I can guess what brought you. You want to know about the franchise bill the council passed this afternoon. Well, I may as well let the cat out of the bag now—I'm going to sign it. That'll give you a—what do you call it?—beat for your paper, won't it? Well, I'm glad to put a good thing in your—"

"Excuse me, Mr. Grover," broke in McCracken, earnestly, pulling a copy of the evening paper from his pocket with fingers that twitched in spite of him, "will you please look at clause six of that bill and give me your candid opinion about it?"

The mayor glanced down the page, his face showing a faint trace of perplexity, as if he scarcely comprehended what the reporter was driving at. "Oh—er—er—about South Clayton," he remarked at last, the wrinkles on his forehead melting away. "Well, I'll tell you. That's the strongest part of the bill. It's the principal reason I decided to sign it—the people over the river should have had better accommodations long ago and—"

McCracken interrupted. "Mr. Grover," he said, eagerly laying his hand impulsively on the mayor's arm, "doesn't it strike you that there is a great deal more in that clause than appears on the surface? Suppose you sign the bill? You'll have given the South Side Railroad company a grip on South Clayton that can't be loosened for 30 years. The railroad will have the place by the throat and can do as they please about fares, accommodations and everything else. The bill doesn't say anything about three-cent fares over the river; it says, 'exclusive right to cross North river,' etc. That seems to me to tie up South Clayton pretty effectually in the way of transportation and prevent its getting any kind of service but what the South Side railroad is willing to give. That 'exclusive right' business bars any other road getting in there for 30 years, doesn't it?"

"South Clayton is bound to grow. There's two big mills there now and more coming. By and by, when the people over there wake up to the fact that this franchise has sold them into bondage to the South Side railroad, I wouldn't give much for the political future of the men responsible."

McCracken paused, his swift speech halted by the look of astounded comprehension dawning on the mayor's face. "Good Lord," Grover exclaimed, running one hand excitedly through his hair, and staring at the newspaper in the other as if it was an infernal machine about to annihilate him, "why didn't I have sense enough to see through the trick myself? The South Side railroad worked a mighty shrewd scheme in that clause, but I'll block their game if it costs me a second term as mayor. You're right enough about the future, but the South Claytonites won't thank me for preventing their getting street railway service, I can tell you—just now, anyway. You've done Clayton a good turn, McCracken," the mayor concluded, dubiously, "but I'm afraid you've done for me politically."

"I don't see it in that light," said McCracken, warmly. "Suppose you veto the bill, and then put a signed article in the Clayton papers stating your reasons? Every man in the city that stands for good, clean politics and has got sense enough to look ahead a few years, will see that you have done a wise thing and safeguarded municipal interests. Of course, you'll have the railroad and its influence to fight, but that isn't strong enough to defeat you."

The mayor dashed the newspaper to the floor. "You've hit it!" he cried, seizing the reporter's hand, and shaking it like a pump-handle. "I believe I'm losing my own wits. The bill's a downright steal, of course, on the face of it. If I show it up in the papers tomorrow morning I believe on my soul I'd be sure of a second term even on an independent ticket—" Grover's eyes suddenly narrowed at the corners. "Look here, McCracken," he said, bluntly, "I wish you'd tell me how you happened to come to me with this business instead of rushing it into your paper? A sensation of this sort would be a cinch for the 'Telegram,' and would have meant something to you personally, eh? Besides, I've never regarded Mr. Nichols as very friendly to me politically. There's always a reason at the bottom of everything. What's yours?"

Mr. McCracken looked the mayor squarely in the eyes. "I've got two reasons, Mr. Grover," he said, slowly. "Firstly, I have always believed you to be that uncommon person, a clean politician, and I hated to see your future chances ruined by something that wasn't your fault; secondly—well, I don't always intend to be a newspaper man, I hope to get into politics myself some time, and if you go higher, as I am sure a man as you will, I'd like to have your friendship—and help."

Grover silently regarded for a full minute the alert, frank young face looking into his own, then all at once he laid his hand familiarly on McCracken's shoulder. "I thank you, Mr. McCracken, for your good opinion," he said, feelingly, "and I can truly say that I have tried to be what you claim I am. As for the other part of it," with a quick smile, "you can rely on me now or in the future for any assistance in my power that will further your ambition. By the way," as McCracken reached for his hat, "I don't mind saying, between ourselves, that if I get a second term here in Clayton, I shall strengthen my fences for the legislative nomination, and I shall need a secretary—a sharp, brainy, ambitious young fellow who will be devoted to my interests—like yourself, for instance. That wouldn't be a bad opening, eh? Well, well," as McCracken began to stammer his thanks, "suppose you come up to dinner tomorrow night—I shall have more time then—and talk it over. Perhaps my daughter can give you some points as to what I shall expect of you as my secretary; she's filling the position just at present. I shall expect you at 7:30. Good night, Mr. McCracken. I sha'n't forget in a hurry the service you have done Clayton—and me, I promise you. Good night, McCracken, good night."

—Farm and Fireside.

The Spirit of Decoration Day



THE WELDED BULLET

A Story for Decoration Day

By MRS. F. M. HOWARD.

THE beautiful Southern cemetery was gay with flowers and flags that bright Memorial day. Not even a lowering cloud had crossed the perfect sky, and the sun shone cheerily, and the soft breezes fanned the cheeks of two ladies sitting together on one of the many rustic seats. The procession had gone and flowers were everywhere, and especially on the graves which were marked by the little flags.

There were many of them, for the small town had been near the storm center of those storm-tossed days, and

and I can remember yet the stony look of despair which would come over her poor face when an engagement was in progress into which Harry was likely to be called.

"It came at last. After the battle of Gettysburg they were sent home—both fatally shot, and the bodies had been found together, the report said."

"And your grandmother?" asked Mrs. Warner, in a tone of horror.

"Went quite mad at the sight. She had dreamed of it—had tried to fortify herself, and become used to the awful thought of the possibility, but the reality drove reason completely from its throne."

"Without any real evidence that such was the case, she took it for granted that they had met and killed each other, and for years she nursed the idea in her poor, crazed brain until it seemed as if we should go insane with her."

"And did she never recover?"

"Not entirely. The sequel is the strangest of all. Several years after peace was declared we were entertaining a friend, a newspaper man, who had made a success in his profession. He had on his watch chain a peculiar looking charm and I, with the curiosity of youth, noticed it."

"The charm has a singular history," he said, detaching it from his chain and handing it to me. It was two bullets, welded together as they met in the air, hot from the muskets' mouth, and bound with a golden band and ring."

"Will you tell it, please? I asked as I examined it with interest before passing it on to my mother."

"I was a reporter then," said Mr. Rolf, "and had been detailed to describe the field of Gettysburg for my paper." At the name of Gettysburg, which we never mentioned in her presence, grandmother's sunken eyes began to kindle, and her frame to quiver with eager, strained interest. "The horrors of it had sickened me until I was about to turn away from it all, faint and weary of my task, when a singular sight arrested me. Out a little from the rest were two bodies, one wearing the gray, the other the blue, and tears had fallen equally over each."

"It is a sad story," remarked Mrs. Kenneth, whose sweet face showed lines drawn by great suffering and care. "I cannot expect you to realize all it meant to us; seeing our cities besieged, our homes threatened and despoiled. It was no wonder, I think, that the southern women were unreasonable—that hatred and passion were nursed into the very veins of their infant babes. I was only a little girl, then, but the memory will never die out, though calmness and better judgment have taken out the bitterness and passion."

"War at its best is horror. We too suffered," Mrs. Warner said, gently.

"Grandmother had two sons," resumed Mrs. Kenneth, "and tall, beautiful lads they were. I can feel yet the thrill of my childish worship of my uncles, William and Harry. William was the oldest, and two years before the war broke out he had a very advantageous offer to go into business in New York. We had never held slaves, not so much from principle as a distaste for the system, so when the war broke out the race question had comparatively little to do in molding our feelings. It was a fight against invasion, and Harry threw himself into it with all the ardor of a young and fiery nature. Grandmother wrote at once to William, begging him to come home, but, to her horror and grief, he wrote her saying that he had already enlisted and was the captain of a northern company."

"The news cut her deeply, and from that day she seemed to have a premonition that some day the brothers would meet in battle. The thought was hor-

confused by her abrupt demand; then a sudden light broke over his countenance. "I believe, upon my soul, the name was Gordon. I was so interested in what was evidently a bit of family history that I searched for the evidence of their identity, which I readily found on letters in the pockets."

"I remember writing up the incident for the northern paper I was engaged on, but of course you never saw that. Yes, I am almost positive the name was Gordon, but I can make sure by referring to the article in my scrapbooks at home. Any relative of yours, ma'am?" for grandmother was still looking at him in an agony of effort to comprehend all he was saying.

"Tell it to her again," said mother in a low voice. "They were her sons; I knew they could never harm one another, my dear, dear brothers," and mother's voice broke in a low sob.

"He told the story over in clear, gentle tones, dilating upon the tenderness of that last embrace. Grandmother's face grew white and at the last word she fainted, something which had never occurred during all the dreadful days of her insanity. She was like a little child when she came out of that long, deathlike swoon. Her mind seemed to have gone back to the days when her sons were boys at home together, and she talked of them more naturally than she had since that dreadful day when they were brought home, and the nightmare of dread and terror which had hovered over her so long seemed to be dispelled almost entirely."

"What a mercy," Mrs. Warner exclaimed, fervently. "But what of the bullet charm? Your friend said it was connected with the story."

"Yes, quite remarkably so. Here it is on my watch guard at this moment, a souvenir so precious that nothing could replace it."

"Mr. Rolf told us that he had picked it up but a little way from where my uncles were lying, and grandmother seized upon the fact as a proof that if her boys, in the excitement of the battle, had really shot at each other, God's own hand had caught the missiles and welded them together, as the hearts of her sons were united in their life and in death. Mr. Rolf never took back the charm but gave it to grandmother, and she cherished it as her most valued possession as long as she lived."

"I do not wonder that you cherish it." Mrs. Warner turned over the curious relic reverently. The gold was worn and the ring almost black with age, but the leaden bullets, flattened by the force with which they had come together, were perfect as ever and worn very smooth with constant wear. "You said your grandmother never fully recovered."

"No, not fully, but her later years were comforted. If she grew weary and excited, the touch of the welded



"IT IS A SAD STORY."



"SHE GAVE ME THE CHARM"

bullets in her hand would quiet her, and she would sit for hours with it, whispering softly: "God is good. He is very good," in a gentle, uncomplaining tone which would bring tears to our eyes. I cared for her in her last illness and she gave me the charm as the choicest legacy she had to bestow. I think she was quite sane for the few minutes before her death. The vacant, troubled look was all gone from her eyes, and they were perfectly radiant with joy at the last as she reached upward with her thin, wasted hands, crying: "My boys, my boys," in thrilling tones of joy."



"WHO WAS IT?" SHE DEMANDED.

The sun was dropping westward as the ladies rose to go. Mrs. Kenneth had replaced the charm upon her chain and Mrs. Warner wiped away the tears of sympathy which had gathered in her eyes, and as they left the grounds she looked back. The monument stood bathed in the glowing sunshine, a shining finger pointing upward out of the grave of the dark and terrible past.

Lessons of Memorial Day.

Memorial day has played a larger share than many of us realize in our national life. In no country on the globe is a day so entirely devoted to the memory of its heroes, so generally observed throughout the length and breadth of the land. The day itself is well chosen when the spring offers its choicest blossoms in profusion and nature presents its loveliest aspect. It is a day culled from the period when life is at its best to do honor to those "who being dead, yet live!" What a lesson it is to the child, so easily impressed by example. It is a delight to witness the exercises of the little ones in school, in honor of the day, and to realize that it is thus good citizens are molded, to hear their fresh young voices sing the national anthems and hsp the story of some deathless deed. No set of a death's of patriots as long. Memorial 4-

is thus observed.