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"ORDERED SHOT"

A MEMORIAL DAY STORY

THE original manuscript of the following narrative is in the possession of a grandnephew of the man who wrote it in the year 1862 in one of the camps of the Federal army.

It is here printed for the first time. The real names of persons and of places have been changed to fictitious ones. The signature at the end, which was somewhat rapidly written, was apparently added later, since immediately above it there are obvious signs of a pen having adhered to the paper by means of dried ink.

As will be seen, it was intended for one who would already be in possession of some of the facts of the case, and it is in that light that it must be read. It is dated from the camp of the Federal army at Jacksonville, Md., Sept. 25, 1862, and reads thus:

It is now 10 p. m., and I am to be shot at daybreak. I am tired and have not much time before me for writing. Yet I am going to set down here clearly and so that no doubt may remain what happened in my case at the storming of Davidstown redoubt the day before yesterday and how it was that I did what I did.

I write this to you, my nephew and only near relative, so that you may read it when you grow up (for they have promised to let my lawyer have it). You will then know how your father died, and you will also know that nothing dishonorable attaches to my name—our name—in spite of all. The court has found me guilty, but that is mere circumstance—hideous circumstance. It is not my fault, and my conscience is clear before God, my final tribunal.

Firstly, though, I must tell you about your father. Long before the war broke out he and I had quarreled—about your dear mother. That is a

a burden to me for years—in fact, ever since that which I just told you of.

For your mother, when I dared think of her (could think of her, I should say), I never knew anything but love. I was not so grief-stricken when I heard of her death as I thought I should have been. I have loved her better and been more at peace since then.

Your father never let me know of her death; I heard of it from a casual friend. So instead of a possible reconciliation between your father and me, a thing which I would have almost welcomed then over her grave, I think I hated him more. They say love can only turn to hatred, never to friendship, and so that chance passed.

It is midnight now. Well, the next thing I must tell you is that the man in my regiment whom I killed was—as they said at the court martial today—an enemy of mine.

His name was Williams, and he was until recently employed in our firm in a comparatively subordinate position. He was a troublesome, self-opinionated man, of no great value to the business, and not long ago he was gotten rid of, largely at my instigation and thoroughly as he deserved.

However, he belonged to the militia, and when the war broke out he was given a commission in this regiment.

I volunteered for service, and I, too, was put into this regiment as private, and thus it came about that he so soon found himself in a position to take his revenge upon me, and well did he do it, the blackguard. That's immaterial now, but it is necessary that you should understand that the whole regiment knew these facts, and knew, too, that although I had supported his bullying for a long time without a murmur it was not unlikely that I should try to get even with him if I had an opportunity.

Our regiment was almost in the center of the first line the day before yesterday at the storming of the big redoubt, and we had had the brunt of the fighting all day. The enemy had thrown up some very strong earthworks in front of the main defenses, and our artillery, aided by the infantry, had had a lot of work to do in demolishing them and driving the enemy from them.

We had stormed the earthworks twice already and had lost at least a third of our officers and men. I had two minor wounds only.

The captain of my company, Franklin, was killed in the second assault, and Williams took his place in command.

Then the big assault was ordered on a weak point in their main defenses where our heavy artillery had made a breach, and we were hurled at it, regiment upon regiment.

There was a surge and a roar of fighting. One was conscious of nothing but explosions and shouts and screams, blood everywhere and men struggling and men fallen. At last I was on the slope at the foot of the breach, stumbling over bodies and fighting my way blindly, half choked by smoke and dust.

And then suddenly I saw your father.

I cannot explain what happened within me at that moment. I was half mad and dazed from a wound in the head and perhaps half a child again. I cannot explain, but I saw him as though he were the only man before me. Despite all the years since I had last seen him and the state he was in, with blood and grime on his face and in his grizzled hair, I saw him as though we were at home together in the old days.

It was as though a vision flashed on me and made me unconscious of the ghastly holocaust around us. Perhaps your mother was near.

But it was only to be an instant. He saw me also, and whether the same feelings were in him I do not know, but he stood as if turned to stone with his gaze full on me.

The next instant some one in front of me and to my right, I could not see who it was, dashed forward and buried a sword half its length in his chest.

I can see George's face now. His jaw dropped, but his eyes remained fixed on me till he fell.

Then I went quite mad, I think. I felt choked, and things swam before me. I killed that man. I do not actually remember how, but men behind me saw it.

He was Williams, of course, the man who killed your father and for whom I am to be shot in an hour or two.

I am tired and will stop. I have said everything, I think.

But I am not sorry. I believe absolutely in the hereafter, and I think that I shall find Helen and George in a very little time now.

Goodby, my boy, and God bless you!

Sphere.

Memorial Day Like All Souls' Day. Memorial day is in truth nothing more than a secular All Souls' day. It owes its origin, according to some accounts, to the women of the south, who began the practice of decorating their graves less than two years after the close of the civil war.

That struggle of four years had kept our country in a constant state of commotion and excitement. Every part of the nation had contributed its men, young and old, to the conflict. When peace was restored there was scarcely a village or town that did not have a grave to remind it of the fearful cost.

A New York newspaper first published a paragraph stating that a few women of Columbus, Miss., had strewn the graves of the dead soldiers, Union as well as Confederate. This touching tribute caused a thrill of tenderness to pass through the north, and it aroused, as probably nothing else could have done, a feeling of national amity and love.



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WESTBOUND No. 31 from Alliance at 1:00 p. m. in connection with No. 9-34 from Omaha at midnight (Omaha-Casper sleeper ready 1:00 p. m.); from Denver 8:00 a. m., from Cheyenne 1:15 p. m., arriving at Douglas 8:15 p. m., Casper 9:50 p. m.

Through standard sleepers between Casper, Douglas and Omaha via Wendover and Alliance. Dining hall at Wendover operated by the Burlington commissary department. Dining cars east of Alliance.

Additional daily except Sunday trains between Morrill and Bridgeport: westbound from Bridgeport at 9:45 a. m.; eastbound from Morrill at 12:10 noon with connections from and to the line south of Bridgeport. For full particulars see new Burlington folders.

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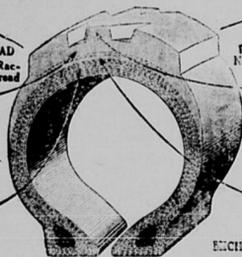
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"I KILLED THAT MAN—MEN BEHIND ME SAW IT."

different story. Never mind that. It was another hard stroke of fate in my life, though perhaps it will all be put right now.

We both loved her, your father and I, and he won. I left our home and went to New York, where I joined Samson & Headley, then a rising firm of engineers. Your father stayed at the old place down south—which I hope will be left for you when this hateful war is over—and there he married your mother and ran the plantation.

We had been very dear friends all our lives, he and I, and I was further embittered by that separation, coming as it did in addition to my other great loss, for your mother was the sweetest woman that ever walked this earth. Ceil; remember that.

She died four years ago next December on your birthday.

Your father I never saw again until the day before yesterday.

It is as much for the sake of her memory as for any other reason that I am making this statement for you.

When this war broke out your father, of course, was bound to the south, the Confederates. I, however, had severed my connection with the south. I had no interest in it. On the contrary, I had every reason to fight for the north. And I have done so and fought as well as any man—with what a result!

My boy, learn to hate war, and above all, civil war, for that is when hell is let loose upon earth. Thank God that your mother never lived to see this!

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