

JIM'S WIDOW



(By Homer Greene.)

A few years ago, when I was in Washington as the representative in Congress from one of the eastern districts of Pennsylvania, the monotony of a somewhat uninteresting session was broken for me one April afternoon by the appearance of a doorkeeper at my desk with a visitor's card. It was simply a scrap of paper on which was written in a woman's handwriting, old-fashioned and awkward, "James Hope's Widow."

"I think she's a little queer, sir," said the doorkeeper, as I followed him up the aisle. In the lobby, waiting for me, was a little woman apparently about sixty years of age. She was dressed neatly in black, but I noticed that her clothing was faded, and somewhat worn in spots.

Her face was pale and wrinkled, and in her eyes, as she came forward to meet me, that searching, wistful look that one always finds in the eyes of those who have long pursued a certain object without success. "I've been a good while getting my courage up to come and see you," she said, smiling. "But I couldn't make out to wait any longer. I'm from W., naming a small village in one of the counties of my congressional district. People were pushing heedlessly past her, and pressing about the door. "I'd like to see you alone, if I can," she said, looking timidly about her. "It's so noisy here it kind of upsets me."

I led the way to one of the alcoves in the House library, and gave her a chair at one side of the small table, while I sat at the other. She came at once to the object of her visit.

"My husband was killed at the battle of Chancellorsville," she said, "or died of his wounds, I don't know which. Or maybe he was taken prisoner and died in the South. I never heard anything from him after that battle. But anyway, he's dead. I know Jim's dead, and I know he died fighting for his country; and I'm Jim's widow."

I supposed, of course, that she had made application for a pension, and had found difficulty in establishing her claim. So I said to her: "I presume the department requires more exact data concerning the time, place and cause of your husband's death. Is it so?"

"No," she replied, "it isn't hardly that. They won't acknowledge that he's dead at all. I can't seem to make them believe it. Not dead!" she exclaimed, softly, "not dead!" and I living for 30 years in the old home! He thought the world and all of me, Jim did!"

"Yes, but, my dear lady," said I, "you must prove his death in the way required by the department before you can hope to receive a widow's pension."

"I don't want any pension!" she exclaimed. "I don't need it; I wouldn't take it. They all make that mistake. But that's not what I'm after."

"You don't understand," she continued, rapidly. "I ought to have told you before. Can any one hear me?" She glanced nervously around the alcove, and out into the aisle. I assured her that no one was listening, and then she bent over the table and whispered to me:

"Well, you know down here in Washington they've got Jim marked on the books as a deserter. But it's not so! It's false! Jim was no coward. He's dead. He died fighting. I know it! I know it!"

"Well," I said, a little wearily, "what can I do for you? As the case stands, I don't see how I can be of any assistance to you."

She relapsed into her former timid manner as she replied, "Why, they told me—they told me that I must see my congressman, and maybe he could get it all changed for me."

I now comprehended her object in seeking my aid, and further questioning drew from her the facts. On the books of the war department her husband was set down as a deserter. She wished to have that record blotted out.

participation shining in her face before a word had been spoken. "It was a mistake, wasn't it?" she asked, quickly. "I'm afraid not," I replied. "The record seems to be about as you told me, and there is every reason to believe that it is correct." It was cruel to hurt her in that way, but it would have been more cruel to deceive her. When I had finished she sat for a long time very still, looking out from the window into some vague distance. Then she straightened herself up again in her chair and spoke without the least hesitation and without the slightest tremor in her voice:

"Well, I'm obliged to you. I'm very grateful to you, indeed. But as for Jim Hope, he's dead! And he died as brave as any of them. I haven't anything to say against those that say he deserted. They are just simply mistaken."

Then again she came into her voice. "Jim Hope desert his country! Jim Hope desert his wife! He might indeed have deserted one of us for the other. He was just wrapped up in each of us. But to desert us both! Never! Never! They don't know Jim Hope, they that say that—they never knew him!"

"I'm going to live long enough to show them they're mistaken! I shall find somebody who saw him die. I shall find his grave. God will help me! I shall prove to all the world that Jim Hope was a hero."

Six weeks later I saw her in the National Cemetery at Arlington. It was



"I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU ALONE."

Memorial day. I was passing down the walk from the main entrance toward the Lee mansion when I came unexpectedly upon her. She was standing alone, reading from one of the tablets that line the walk, a verse of O'Hara's noble poem, "The Bivouac of the Dead."

"I've read 'em all," she said, enthusiastically, after surprised greeting, "every one of 'em, from the gate to here. I think this one is very beautiful."

Slowly and with impressive emphasis she repeated the familiar lines: "Rest on, embalmed and sainted dead! Dear as the blood ye gave, No impious footstep here shall tread The herbage of your grave."

"But about your husband," I said; "have you found any record of his death or burial?"

She looked up at me wearily, and I could see that in the few weeks that intervened since our last meeting she had visibly faded and fallen.

"No," she replied, sadly, "no; I've got to be almost afraid that it's a hopeless task. I've been to all those government cemeteries in the South. He isn't in any of them, and they tell me positively he isn't here."

She raised her eyes and looked wistfully over the long rows of little marble headstones stretching away under the green trees in endless perspective.

"I was afraid," I said, "that you would find it a fruitless task. The government records are usually correct."

Again there came into her face the same look of faith, of determination, of persistence that I had seen in it on the occasion of her visit to me at the capitol.

"I know," she said, softly, "I know it doesn't look reasonable, but I'm satisfied that Jim's dead, and I'm just as well satisfied that he died in the service of his country. Nobody can ever make me believe any differently, and some day—I feel it in my soul—some day I shall lay flowers on his grave. Maybe today! Stranger things have happened. See!" She held up a great bunch of old-fashioned flowers. "I thought I'd bring 'em along anyway; one never knows, and I thought maybe God would take pity on me today—today—and show me Jim's grave here."

After a moment we started to walk on toward the mansion. We came at last to the massive stone that marks the resting place of the bones of the unknown dead, and at her request I read for her the inscription, eloquent in its simplicity and thrilling with pathos.

"Beneath this stone repose the bones of two thousand one hundred and eleven unknown soldiers, gathered, after the war, from the fields of Bull Run and the route to the Rappahannock. Their remains could not be identified, but their names and deaths are recorded in the archives of their country, and its grateful citizens honor them

as of their noble army of martyrs. May they rest in peace. September, A. D. 1865."

When I had finished she looked up at me with tears in her eyes and on her cheeks. "Maybe Jim's there," she said, "under that stone. Maybe they found his body and couldn't tell his name. I know he was at Bull Run and along the Rappahannock. He used to write to me from there, and if anybody ever belonged to the noble army of martyrs, he did."

After a moment's pause, she continued, "I'd rather he had a grave of his own. It would be more of a comfort to me to lay flowers on it just for him; but even this is better—oh! it's worlds better than to have it true what's written in that dreadful book over there at Washington."

She began to sob a little, and felt nervously in the folds of her dress for her handkerchief. When she found it she gave it a little twitch to release it, and with it came from her pocket something which floated for a moment in the air, and then fell to the ground at her feet. It was a little old-fashioned card photograph of a soldier in uniform.

A bronzed veteran who stood near by, with an empty sleeve pinned to his breast, stooped gallantly and picked up the bit of cardboard, and was about to return it to the widow when something about the picture attracted his attention. He looked at it steadfastly for a moment, and then he looked at her.

"Was he any relation to you?" he asked, holding up the photograph.

"Why, yes," she replied, brokenly; "yes, he was my husband. Did—did you know him?"

The veteran was still studying the picture as he replied to her. "Did I know him? Why, I was his captain. There wasn't a man in my company that I knew better or loved more. He was every inch a soldier. He was devoted to the flag. He was with us at Gettysburg. He fought like a—like a—why, he was a whole battalion in himself. He was killed there in the peach orchard. He died with his head on my arm. I think he was the bravest man, the most heroic soldier I ever saw."

The little old woman had grown taller, straighter, younger with every word. Pride, joy, gratitude inexpressible shone in her countenance. She put her hands together, and raised them

THOUGHTS FOR MEMORIAL DAY.

By Carrie Macmullen. The sentiments responsible for the establishment of decoration day as an annual memorial to dead soldiers are complex, the feelings of those who participate in the services are varied. It is hard for a reasonable being to understand the necessity for the slaughter of a very brave and noble portion of the human race in order to establish peace, prosperity and the right to pursue happiness for the remaining portion. People go to the cemeteries on decoration day filled with mixed emotions. It is hard for a father and mother to understand why they should give up their son in all the strength of his manhood, a sacrifice on the altar of his country. The privilege of placing a few flowers on his grave is a small compensation for the great loss they have sustained. If there were no life beyond the tomb their gray hairs would come speedily in sorrow to fill other new made graves beside that of the hero. A business life is a battle, but the soldier carries his life openly in his hand, ready at any moment to fling it away as a sacrifice for the benefit of his

men. Willing to do or die they went forth in their might to belch out death to any who might rise against our flag, the emblem of a free people, or to treat with American magnanimity such foes as might fall captives to them. Such a man is the soldier of the United States army. He is not an ideal man existing in the imagination of some dreamer, but a moving, seething figure, full of snap in the very beat line of realism. He is not a man with a soul so dead that he has never said that this is not his native land. Being true to his country he is very likely to be true to his father and mother, true to his wife, true to his children. Many believe that war is an unmixed evil. In the abstract it is. It is wholesale murder, brought about sometimes by the incompetency of national powers to arbitrate their differences and at other times by insurrectionary uprisings of the people. In either case, the soldier, who represents force, execution of the government's demand, is an after consideration. The fighting comes last, and frequently it is the last of the soldier. Yes, cover the grave with beautiful

flowers of such a martyr. Little he'll reck if we let him sleep on in the grave where a Yankee has laid him, but we would rather see flowers through our tears on the little mound that represents his last resting place than dried grass. Shed patriotic tears at a patriot's grave. It is not a time or place for levity.

high above her head. She turned her glorified face to the sky. "God, I thank thee for this day!" she said. The old soldier went on enthusiastically, "Yes, he won his corporal's stripes by the most daring piece of work I ever saw. That was after he came to us. He had been—" The captain hesitated, flushed a little, looked first at the widow and then at me. "Did you know," he said, "did you know that he—that he—oh, I have a letter here that'll tell you all about it. I nearly forgot it. I found it in his pocket before they buried him."

He drew from his wallet a folded paper, yellow and broken with age. In the meantime I had obtained a camp-chair from a passing boy, and induced the widow to sit in it. I feared that in the reaction which was sure to come she would be stricken with faintness. The veteran handed to her the letter. "I have read it many times," he said. "But I never knew more about his life before he enlisted, with us than this letter contains. After thirty years of search I had given up the hope that I should ever deliver it to the person to whom it was written. It is a merciful Providence that has brought us together here today."

Looking on the faded, fluttering sheet, and recognizing, as she looked, the familiar hand, the widow's eyes again filled with tears, her voice choked so that she could not speak, and she handed the letter to me with an appealing gesture. I laid my hat reverently aside, and with none but this listening I read the letter written by this brave soldier to his young wife, thirty years before, on the eve of one of the greatest battles of the great rebellion. This was the letter:

June 29, 1863, near Gettysburg. My Dearest Mary: I suppose you've heard the story before this time. It's bad enough, but the worst thing about it is that it's true. I did desert. I was cowardly. I'll never try to excuse myself to anybody but you; but I was so homesick! I wanted to see you so, and the baby. I would've given my life for just a glimpse of each of you. I did go without leave one night, I discussed myself. I stole my way to the North. I got to W.—one night after dark. Nobody knew me. I went down the road to our home. I looked in through the window. It was raised. The lamp was lit. You sat there holding the baby on your lap, and you sung to him. "Papa is a soldier brave." And you stopped and said, "Yes, and true and good, and we're proud of him, because he is so brave and true and good." And it came over me all of a sudden what a coward I was, and I just slunk away, and went back to the front and enlisted in a New York regiment. Now I go by the name of James Foley. I got back in time to fight at Chancellorsville. Since that battle I've got to be a corporal. I like my captain. He is very good to me. I haven't had the heart to

write to you before, but we've got a little child, tomorrow. Oh, I wish I could just write tonight and say how sorry I am, and ashamed, and it was cowardly; but you'll never be ashamed of what I've done since I come back, just the baby. God bless him! I can't forget how he looked that night. There goes the long roll. That means turn out quick. I'll finish this tomorrow.

But he never finished it. It was never even addressed. The last few lines were blurred and blotted as if the letter had been folded hastily and thrust into the writer's pocket. He left nothing behind him to indicate his real identity—no clue to start the letter on its way to his "dearest Mary."

When the reading was ended a hush fell upon all of us. From the amphitheater, over the heads of a thousand eager listeners, came the resonant voice of the orator: "Let us not forget that the men who marched under this glorious flag, who fought under it, suffered under it died for it, did so because they loved it. And whether their ashes lie at the foot of splendid monument or in the unknown grave, they deserve a tribute of esteem and gratitude from all who love their country and revere her flag."

At last the little woman found her voice. "That's him!" she said, "that's Jim. He loved his country and revered her flag; and that other, after thirty years, surely that won't be counted up against him."

She looked up at us beseechingly, but before either of us could frame a reply another thought came to her. "Oh, if I only knew where his grave is!" she exclaimed, "if I only knew!"

Quick as thought the veteran spoke up. "It's here, madam, right here in this cemetery. I was by it not half an hour ago."

"She rose slowly to her feet, looking steadfastly at him as though he might make an effort to escape. "Take me there!" she said; "please take me there—now!"

In her excitement her flowers had fallen to the ground. I picked them up and gave them to her. She smiled at me and said, "I told you I should need them. I felt it. I knew it."

Ten minutes later, looking across the



"WHY, I WAS HIS CAPTAIN!"

long rows of grassy mounds with the afternoon shadows resting heavily upon them, I saw Jim's widow kneeling by a soldier's grave, her hands clasped and her face uplifted as if in grateful prayer. Beside her stood the gray-haired veteran, with bared head, and on Jim Hope's grave lay the bunch of flowers brought by his widow in the longing hope that the good God would show her where to place them.

"I wish only to add that a few weeks later I introduced in the House a bill to expunge from the record the charge of desertion against James Hope. When the bill came up for final passage I read Hope's last letter to his wife. That letter carried the day. When the vote was taken there was not a dissenting voice."

But I never could induce Jim's widow to apply for a pension. "I can get along without it," she said. "They've got the books fixed all right now down there at Washington, and that's all I want. I'm satisfied and happy."

A Brave Man's Gentleman.

The Army and Navy Journal gives a touching incident, which shows how gentle a nature may exist beneath the sternness which at times reckons not the life of men while in the pursuit of victory. The late Commander James W. Carlin was in command of the Vandalia at Apia, Samoa, during the terrible storm of March 18, 1889. One evening, some years afterward, on returning to his room while visiting his sister, he found a mouse that had fallen into a basin of water, and was struggling for its life. "There was agony and defiance in that little fellow's eye," said the commander, speaking of it the next day. "As I gazed on that helpless little creature I thought of that terrible night on the Vandalia, and going to the open window I gently emptied the contents of the basin. I didn't dry him with my towel, but I saved his life," the commander added.

A Man's Reasoning.

"I see," she said, "that a couple who were married at Philadelphia the other evening received 98 clocks as wedding presents." "And yet," he bitterly replied, "I'll bet she'll never be on time when they expect to go out anywhere."—Chicago Times-Herald.

The Golden Wedding.

Query—"So you have been married 50 years?" "Hornbill—" "Fifty years?" "And never quarreled!" "Hornbill—" "Never quarreled? We didn't talk enough about each other for that."—Brooklyn Life.

A WEEK IN THE RECORD OF HAPPENINGS SEVEN DAYS.

Five Killed by Explosion.—The Illinois Central Railroad Company has announced that the explosion of the boiler of the locomotive attached to south-bound passenger train No. 21 on the Illinois Central railroad at Dubois. The dead are: Charles Fricke, engineer, Centralia, Ill.; Tom Wright, Odis, Ill. The injured: Sam Acoff, section hand, will die; John Hampton, section hand, will die; Henry Holtall, section hand, scalded; Frank Johnson, colored, porter, slightly scalded; Charles Novack, section hand, scalded; William Scherer, section hand, scalded. The section men, all of Dubois, were standing near the track when the explosion occurred. The passengers in the Pullman and four day coaches were badly shaken up by the force of the explosion, which lifted the cars from the track. The engine was completely demolished. The front end of the baggage car was broken by the force of the explosion, and the tracks were so badly damaged that it was necessary for all Illinois Central trains to run over the Centralia and Chester tracks between Centralia and Chester. No cause can be ascribed for the explosion.

Failed to Elect Conductor.

Peoria.—The closing session of the diocesan convention was harmonious. The next annual meeting will be held at Quincy. The following were selected as the members of the standing committee: Rev. C. W. Laffingwell, E. H. Rudd, R. F. Sweet and Messrs. C. E. Chandler, R. W. Grubb, H. A. Willinson. E. C. Epler of Quincy was chosen chancellor. Board of Equalization—J. F. Sommers, W. T. Bell, C. E. Chandler and Rev. V. H. Webb of Monmouth. T. B. Martin was re-elected treasurer, and Dr. E. H. Rudd was again chosen secretary and registrar. On the board of missions Rev. V. H. Webb was made secretary and treasurer, the other members being Rev. W. M. Purce and Carl Nyblach and C. E. Chandler, De Forest Smith and W. N. Boniface. The failure to elect a bishop conductor is deeply regretted in some quarters. Bishop Burgess is by reason of age and ill health incapacitated from performing the duties of his office. The matter will probably be brought up again next year.

Run Down on Way to Wedding.

Decatur.—Harry Miller, with fractured skull and internal injuries, was picked up unconscious a mile out of Moweaqua. He had been struck by a train in the night. Letters in his pocket indicate that he had corresponded with Mary Banberger in Decatur. She said they were engaged, that he was coming from Marietta, Pa., to work here, and that they would be married. She left for Moweaqua. Doctors have little hope of Miller's recovery.

Standard Oil Men's Pay Increased.

Springfield.—Captain W. E. Palmer, local manager of the Standard Oil Company, received a dispatch stating that at a meeting of the board of directors of the Standard Oil Company of Kentucky, which has control of the Western states, it was decided to advance the wages of all employees 10 per cent. This will affect 14,000 employees and will increase the pay rolls \$22,000 per week.

Sale of Centralia and Chester.

Sparks.—The Centralia & Chester railroad was sold at public auction by Stuart Brown, master in chancery, by virtue of a decree of the United States Southern Illinois District court, to John E. Walsh of St. Louis for the sum of \$450,000. The sale is subject to the approval of the said court. The road has for over three years been the possession of C. E. Hornbill, who will continue to operate the road until the end of the year.



COVER THE GRAVE WITH BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS.