

## AT A PATRIOT'S GRAVE

Grandmother's Memorial Day Speech  
By DORA OLIPHANT COE.



THERE AIN'T NO MEMORIAL DAY  
NO MORE.

GRANDMOTHER ADAMSON had reached into the depths of her rose-sprigged handbox, but just as her fingers touched the stiff ruching in the front of her best bonnet her attention was arrested by a ring at the front door. As though suddenly petrified in her stooping position, grandmother waited while Susan Ann, her daughter, creaked through the passage way leading from the kitchen.

At the first words of greeting grandmother straightened with a snap like a jack-knife, and an angry color flamed on her cheeks.

"Why, Marthy Ellen, what lovely roses! Did you ever see the flowers so handsome as they are this year? Come right in. It's dreadful hot, ain't it? Seems like I never knowed it to warm up as early as it has this season, but, then, it's been awful fine for the flowers. 'Pears like the roses and laylocks and pinles' has just tried themselves to see who could do the most bloomin'. Now, that's a pretty idee, ain't it, Mrs. Rayburn, that laylock wreath?"

"Yes; laylocks was Dick's favorite flower, and he set this bush out hisself, and I thought I'd make a wreath to hang on the cross on his tombstun."

The expression on Grandmother Adamson's face would have made a good study. From a blaze of anger it passed through all the stages of horrified scorn to a stony determination.

The development of the conversation beyond the paper-covered board walls collected her nebulous chaotic emotions into a stern resolve.

Susan Ann was stout, and she had grieved all the morning over the long walk to the graveyard. As she sank ponderously into a chair, she lamented:

"I get heavier on my feet every day I live, and the heat to-day is just awful on me. If mother hadn't had her heart so set on it, I wouldn't try to go to the cemetery. I just know I'll be sick."

"Couldn't she walk up with us?" Mrs. Rayburn asked. "We'll not walk fast."

"Oh, mother's as spry on her feet as you be. I hadn't thought of her goin' with any one else, but I don't see why she couldn't. It'd be a real help. She ain't got nothin' to carry, for she took a big basket of flowers up this morning, before breakfast. She's just that wrapped up in Decora-

tion day I couldn't disappoint her about goin'. She's gettin' ready now. I'll go and see if it'll be all right."

But grandmother, with what was almost one movement, had stooped forward and slipped off her congress gaiters, at the same time taking from its box her bonnet. She slipped a hand through the round handle of a little basket and scurried down the passage-way and out through the back door. On the step she delayed just long enough to put on her shoes; then, with her best bonnet carried more carelessly than ever before in its dozen years of use, she hurried out through the back gate.

The cemetery was being made bright with flowers when grandmother passed through the iron gateway, and her face hardened as she recognized some of the stooping figures and the graves over which they bent.

At a brilliantly-decked mound she stopped and, kneeling, said:

"I hate to do it, Jeremiah, but I know you'd want me to. I won't take them to any one else, though, Jeremiah, though I know you'd say fur me to, if you was here. But dearie, I've keered fur these things ever since they was buds, jest as tender as if they'd a b'en babies, and jest so's you could have them to-day, and I jest can't see any one else have 'em. How would you like to look over these postes and see that laylock wreath a-hangin' on old Dick Rayburn's tombstun? You fought, bled and died almost fur nothin', Jeremiah, when that old copperhead gits jest as many flowers as you do."

Grandmother had turned up the skirt of her black alpaca dress and, into the receptacle thus formed, had put every flower that had lain on Jeremiah's grave. She carried them all over to a far corner of the cemetery and buried them under a pile of last year's leaves. Then she went back to the bare mound.

Soon the faraway notes of "Cover Them Over with Beautiful Flowers," told that the procession was coming.

Grandmother heard, but she did not once lift her eyes. She sat directly upon the middle of the grave, her skirts spread as far as they would over the flowerless mound, and she was knitting as calmly as if she were seated on a little splint-bottomed chair in her own room. She paid no attention to the astonished group that stopped before her.

"Ahem!" coughed the master of ceremonies, Henry Blake.

Grandmother looked up. "Howdedo, Henry." Then, looking down again, "one, two, three, widen; one, two, three, turn."

"We've come to decorate Comrade Adamson's grave," hesitated the puzzled Blake.

"Comrade Adamson's grave don't need no decoratin'—five, six, narrow; one, two—"

"You hain't forgot it's Decoration day, have you?" questioned the man.

"If I have, I've been the only one that has." A flourish of her needle indicated the flower-decked mounds.

"But Comrade Adamson was a hero, and he—"

"Because he was a hero is why I don't want him decorated. That's the only way to distinguish him from them as ain't heroes."

With a little sweep of her skirts, grandmother rose to her feet.

"It's jest because Jeremiah was a hero that his grave ain't goin' to be strewed with flowers jest like the ones where the babies and copperheads lies. The babies might a-growed up to be heroes, if they'd had a chanst, but they didn't, and they's three hundred and sixty-four and a quarter other days in the year to decorate their graves in. It's almost a insult to—"

"Well, this day don't mean nothin' no more. It used to be set apart that we might honor the nation's dead, but the day, like me and some of the others here, has outlived our usefulness and our time. Let it be Decoration day, if you want to, but don't call it Memorial day any more. It's

just a holiday for the young folks to have ball games and picnics, and the older folks to put flowers on the graves of their dead.

"Jest look through them trees. Can you tell which is the graves of soldiers who fought, bled, and died for this beautiful country? If this day was what it was named fur, there wouldn't be a flower in this hull graveyard exceptin' on a soldier's grave. I reckon it's little enough we do, even when we set aside a whole day out of a year to them as give their hull lives, and mighty promisin' lives some of 'em was, too.

"Take your flowers. Put 'em on any grave you happen to see. It don't matter. This is jest Decoration day. There ain't no Memorial day no more."—Los Angeles Times.

### The First Volunteer

THE first volunteer for the civil war was Dr. Charles F. Rand of Washington, D. C. A certificate in the capitol of New York state attests the priority of Dr. Rand's tender of his services. This certificate is signed by the mayor and two prominent citizens of Batavia, N. Y., and also by the county clerk and the sheriff of Genesee county, stating that in less than ten minutes after the call for troops by President Lincoln, April 15, 1861, for 75,000 men the name of Charles F. Rand was enrolled as a soldier.

Among the war records at Washington there is none of an earlier enlistment than that of Dr. Rand and the honor has therefore been given him by common consent.

Not only was Dr. Rand the first volunteer for the civil war, but he was also the first soldier to win the congressional medal of honor for distinguished gallantry in action.

This event occurred at Blackburn's Ford, Va., in less than three months after his enlistment. His command was ordered to retreat, and every man obeyed save young Rand, at the time but 18 years of age. The rest of his battalion of 500 men was swept in disorder from the field, but Rand held his ground, despite the fact that the field was plowed by shot and shell all about him. The enemy finally absolutely refused to fire at the boy standing bravely alone and firing at them as coolly as if he had a regiment at his back. Rand then crept across the field and a deep ravine and joined the command of Gen. A. H. Barnum.

The congressional medal of honor was not instituted until a year later, and the first one struck off was presented to Rand for his distinguished gallantry on that memorable day at Blackburn's Ford.

#### Memorial Day Address.

Perhaps the most remarkable Memorial day address in the country was that delivered at Marysville, Kan., by Dr. Williamson F. Boyakin, who was the Grand Army orator on the 100th anniversary of his birth. In matter and delivery the speech is said to have been far above the average.

#### Memorial Day.

No pages of a nation's history are more interesting to its people than those which record the brave deeds of its soldiery and no nation on the face of the earth has established so beautiful a custom as that which is contemplated by Memorial day, the strewing of spring flowers over the graves of her departed soldiers.

May the full meaning of the day come to us with all its solemnity and all its beauty, and with the patriotic lesson it presents.

#### Sides with England.

The ameer of Afghanistan says that the British government is within its rights in building strategic railways in that country.

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