

# THE SOLDIER'S EXPERIENCE.

## Why the Old Man Loved the Mignonettes.

### The Hermit of Chelsea College Gardens Spins an Interesting Story of Love and Flowers.

One dreamy, drowsy afternoon toward the end of June, having nothing particular to do, I sauntered in the direction of the Chelsea college gardens. This shady little nook holds the home of some of our old soldiers. There they sit, in solemn rows of fours and fives, on the wooden benches in the cool, green avenue, dreaming away the long summer afternoon, while they watched the children at play on the grass before them.

A great longing came over me to have something of their lives.

If I could come across one alone, I thought, there might be a chance of it. So, with a lingering, backward look at the old fellows, I walked on until I came to a more secluded part of the gardens, where the pensioners cultivated little plots of ground and sold flowers and ferns to the nurse and children, the proceeds of which enabled them to buy tobacco and rum and other small luxuries.

It had been intensely hot, but now a refreshing breeze was tossing the lilac and laburnum trees, and in the cool of the day the old men were all hard at work, watering, weeding and taking opinions as to their respective nurseries. Crossing the gravel path, I came upon a bed composed entirely of mignonette. Its fragrance was delightful, and I paused a moment to enjoy the scent.

This little garden excited my curiosity, and I looked with interest at the gardener. His face was thin and lined, with an expression of settled melancholy in it, but there was something in the large, dark eyes and sensitive mouth that took my fancy.

"Here is an opportunity," I thought. "He looks like a nice, approachable old man and, I dare say, would be glad to have a chat."

At that moment, as if by some sudden transition of mind, he glanced up and fixed his speaking orbs on me.

"What lovely mignonette!" I exclaimed by way of opening fire.

He smiled, but it was such a sad smile I wished he hadn't. It somehow made me feel sick and sorry.

"Let me cut you some, madam," he said gravely. "I will in a moment, if you can wait."

"Please, oh, I should like nothing better!" I answered, seating myself and looking on contentedly, while my new friend went to work with a long pair of rusty scissors.

His face interested me, strangely, none the less when I noticed that the Victoria cross adorned his breast. How could I get him to talk?"

"May I ask why you cultivate only one flower?" I inquired, with sudden inspiration.

He looked at me again in that intense way of his for at least a minute without speaking, then said irrelevantly:

"You have a good, kind face, lady, and"

He paused.

"Thank you for saying so," I rejoined, somewhat tamely, feeling bewildered and wondering what was coming next.

"You asked me just now why I only grow one flower. I will tell you if you care to listen."

"Yes," I replied eagerly; "I am all attention."

"It happened so long ago, yet it seems only like yesterday. Mignon, Mignon!" he half murmured to himself.

I coughed softly to remind him of my presence.

"Lady, did you ever love any one very dearly?" he asked abruptly.

"Have I?" I returned, somewhat taken aback by this unexpected question.

"Well, yes, I have been fond of several people I have met at different stages of my life," was my discreet rejoinder.

"Those two were the only ones I cared for in this world—Mignon and Ralph Stanley."

"Who was Mignon?" I queried gently, for the old man's face was full of emotion when he spoke her name.

"I always called her Mignon and so did he," he continued, without heeding me; "the name suited her so well. She was never without a slip of this"

"touching the flowers in my lap—in her belt or gown. She had a passion for mignonette. That is why we called her Mignon, and she was as sweet as

the flower itself, with her bluebell eyes and nut brown hair."

"Who was this other?" I ventured to ask after a pause.

Again the veteran seemed to forget my existence as he sighed and said musingly:

"To think that I never guessed it. And they were such a bonny pair, too. She could not help loving him, the genial, handsome laddie. Men and officers alike in our regiment simply adored him."

"He served with you, then?"

"Yes, but I was only in the ranks, while he held a commission."

"Yet you were friends?"

"Friends—aye, that we were; from our schoolboy days we were chums. When Ralph was sent to the Crimean war, I threw everything to the winds, enlisted in his regiment and went, too, and we fought in many a fierce battle together. But one thought kept us up through all—dear little Mignon, the vicar's daughter. Ah, what happy old times they were at the vicarage!"

"Mignon was an only child; her father, our coach, Ralph's and mine. What merry little tea parties we had—just we four, the scent of mignonette everywhere. The garden, the windows and the rooms of the old house were full of it—mignonette, all mignonette!"

My glance wandered to the flowers blooming at my feet as I tried to picture the little scene put before me.

"And Ralph loved Mignon as well as I," he pursued, "though neither of us knew the other's secret. Well, those nappy days came to an end. Young Stanley left us to study for the army, while I remained to stagnate in my father's office in town."

"How I envied Ralph's luck! Not that I grudged him any good thing, but my lot in life did seem hard in comparison to his. As the time passed my restlessness and discontent increased. Despite my attachment to Mignon, my humdrum, monotonous existence was so hateful to me. So, when the war broke out and Ralph was ordered abroad, I made up my mind to go, too, in the ranks of the same regiment. Here was an opportunity not to be lost of leading a more glorious life—to fight for my country, my people and for the love of 'old England.'"

"How I dreamed of the home coming after the work was done! Death had no place in my mind. How I anticipated the meeting with Mignon with the love light that I—poor fool—imagined she felt for me shining in her soft blue eyes. I thought I would pour out my heart and tell her I had come back to claim her, never to part any more. Ah, if I had but known!"

He smiled again in his melancholy way and continued:

"Yes, if I had only known that she cared for Ralph I should have been spared many a heartache in after years."

The old soldier gazed abstractedly at his mignonette and doubtless lived over again that memorable campaign, while I wondered if the cross on his breast had anything to do with his history. He answered my glance.

"I am coming to that now, lady. One bitter November night, or rather morning, we awoke to find the enemy bearing down on us in overwhelming numbers before our camp was astray. The men, however, soon roused and fought shoulder to shoulder amid the roar and din of cannon, which madly denied alike men and beast. After awhile I became conscious only of one thing—a figure a few yards ahead of me fighting for dear life. I can see the look on his face now! It was transfigured, shining with dauntless courage that quailed not before the onslaught of the Russians. I believe, at that moment, Ralph lived in every fiber of his being. He gloried in a fight—no one more. He was surrounded and cut off from the rest of us by six or seven of the enemy double his size. Suddenly he staggered and fell. Then I found myself struggling and crushing through countless forms and brandishing steel until I reached the stricken figure. There he lay so white and still, with his brave young face upturned to the leaden sky. My arms went instinctively round him, and as I turned and faced the lot of them—perhaps it was fancy—but a change seemed to come into their eager, glittering eyes as they involuntarily fell back a pace or two. It was only for a moment. They again pressed forward, and no doubt the pair of us would have been quickly cut into mince meat out for an unexpected diversion created just then by the arrival of the Enniskillen dragoons. With their aid the Russians were completely routed, and in the confusion of their retreat and flight I managed to carry Ralph safely back to camp."

"And you escaped unscathed?"

"No, unluckily, lady, I received some very bad cuts on my head and back, which brought about my discharge from the army as being unfit for active service. When I had somewhat recovered,

Ralph told me that Mignon had promised to become his wife, and six months later they were married."

"Did Mignon ever know that you cared for her?" I asked rather huskily.

"Yes; many years after, when they came to see me here, I think, as they carried away some of my mignonette, they both guessed it for the first time."

A bell near by clanged out the tea hour as he finished speaking, so, with a close clasp of the hand, my old man and I parted—Chicago Herald.

#### A Serious Charge.

Bennett, May 24—Ted Cullen is in jail here charged with the attempt of rape on an 11-year-old girl, May Neilson, last Thursday afternoon. The little girl, it is said, was playing on the streets and was enticed into a room at the jail by Cullen. The father of the little girl swore out a warrant for the arrest of Cullen, and he is now behind the bars.

Cullen is a well-known special provincial policeman.

The foregoing report is corroborated by Judge D. L. Fry, formerly editor of the Atlin Globe, who arrived last evening from Bennett. He reports further that Cullen was given a preliminary hearing before magistrates Vickers and Clifford, and remanded for trial. Mr. Fry says further:

"Since the arrest of Cullen a new charge has been made against him by a woman who says that prior to his arrest on the charge of attempted rape he cut a hole in her tent and took out something, but that she was then afraid to proceed against him because he was a policeman."

"The little girl who it is alleged Cullen attempted to victimize is a child of delicate frame, and such an act as is charged against Cullen cannot be too roundly censured. I have known men to be hung in some states for the far less heinous crime of horse stealing."

"I looked up the statutes of Canada and found that rape is punishable in that country by life imprisonment, and attempted rape by two years in jail and a whipping."—Alaskan.

#### Filipinos Lost Heavily.

Manila, May 21.—A force of 500 insurgents attacked 25 scouts of the 48th regiment near San Jacinto, Province of Pangasinan, on Monday, May 7, but were routed by the scouts, ten of their number being killed. The Americans lost two killed.

On April 26 the rebels burned and sacked the town of Trocin, near Bulan, murdering natives who were friendly to the Americans, and two Spaniards. The Americans killed 37 of the insurgents.

On the same date Major Andrews, with two companies of troops, attacked Gen. Mojica's stronghold near Ormoc, Leyte island. Mojicas had brass cannon and plenty of ammunition, but after three hours of fighting the insurgents fled. Their loss is not known. The Americans lost two killed, and eleven wounded. They destroyed the enemy's rifles, powder and stores.

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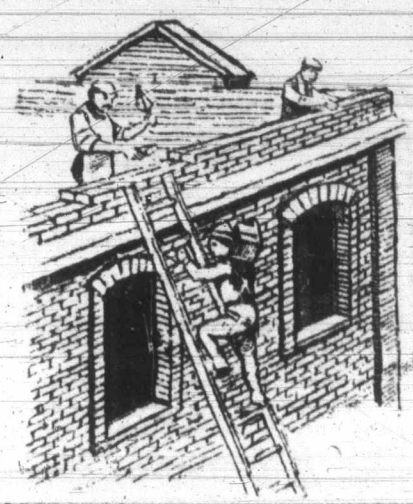
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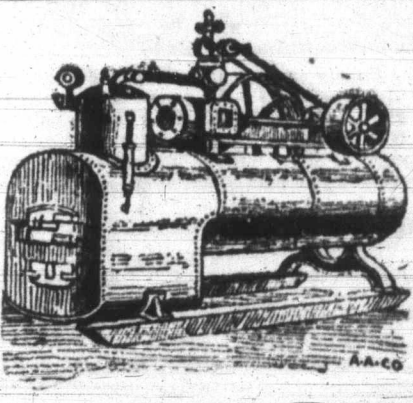
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