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found it so difficult to detach herself from the old house which held so many memories of her lost brother, that the idea of removal was abandoned.

The room that had been Jack's was at the top of the house, and every day since his departure Penelope had paid it a visit, airing it, keeping it in perfect order, finding a faint comfort in handling the objects so often unthinkingly grasped by the boy's strong young fingers. Sometimes, as she moved about the room, she talked to him as though he were present; sometimes she sat in the big chair and thought; but never did she allow herself to shed a tear in that room, for Jack had always had an abhorrence of women's tears. The two geraniums in the dormer window, of which the boy had never taken the slightest notice, she tended devoutly because they had at least breathed the same air with him. Of these tender ministrations she told Jack nothing, remembering his dislike of any show of sentiment, but after he was reported missing she was glad that she had made a friend of the room in this way, as otherwise its emptiness might have caused her to shun it. If it were so that he were dead, she liked to think that in spirit he was near and knew, and if he were living, then must she keep the room warm and friendly against his ultimate return. To this hope of his return she clung now with pathetic tenacity. "I don't feel as though he were dead," she would say to her husband.

Bishop, on the other hand, had quite given the lad up for lost. He found himself extremely busy at the studio these days. His experience with Jack Bateman's photograph had given him his cue, and he had made rather a specialty of soldiers' portraits, so that his success was being talked of a little. It was said that he had the knack of catching the best in a face, and people wondered how he did it.

One drizzly evening toward the end of November Bishop came home to his appetizing dinner to find the little lady at the other end of the table wearing an air of unwelcome excitement.

"I went up to Jack's room," she told him, "and fell asleep in the big chair, and I dreamed that Jack came to the door and looked in and smiled. He didn't say a thing, but he looked happy and well and just his old self. Not a particle changed. I felt so happy when I woke. I feel sure I am going to hear news of him."

"I wouldn't build on it," cautioned Bishop, noting her bright eyes and heightened color.

"I know I shall," asserted Mrs. Penelope. "I've a feeling."

"That settles it, then," said Bishop, kissing her, and the subject was dropped.

Two evenings later Penelope met her husband at the door with a paper in her hand, and dragged him unceremoniously over to the chandelier, her finger glued to a paragraph headed "Returning heroes." Bishop's skeptical eye travelled down the page till a name arrested and held it—Pte. Jack Bateman.

"Now," said Mrs. Bishop, with the solemnity which the occasion demanded, "What do you think of that?"

"There may be other Jack Bateman's, you know, dear. Of course, I hope it is our Jack, but—"

"It is our Jack! I've a feeling. I'm sure I am not mistaken."

Her eyes were shining, her whole demeanor one of joyous anticipation. Penelope had not been sad since her marriage but she had never been so glad as this, and Bishop, while hoping with his whole heart that indeed her premonition might be true, yet was obliged to own to a momentary pang that her happiness in the vent would lie so entirely aside from himself.

"It must be he," she was rattling on excitedly. "There has been some foolish mistake here. We will go to the station to-morrow morning, darling. I feel as if I could go there now and stand all night on the platform to see him in the morning. I feel sure, too, he will come back just his old self. Won't it be splendid, Norman?"

Bishop glanced into the parlor above the mantel of which hung the portrait of the absent one. "To see him come home looking just like that would certainly be splendid," he said.

Jack Bateman did come home—a man grown in body and mind. All the weakness and irresolution were gone from his face, which in strength of character had gained almost unbelievably. There was not a trace of the old domineering spirit that had formerly prayed on his sister's love and forbearance; it had been burned out in the fire of service. Only the gold of the boy's soul had been suffered to survive the furnace of his experiences.

The two men were sitting together that first evening of Jack's return, Penelope having slipped upstairs for a final inspection of her brother's room before conducting him thither.

"By Jove, Jack," said his brother-in-law, "Your work out there has certainly made a man of you. You're twice the chap you went away."

Jack pulled a wry face. "You pretty nearly put it up to me, with that camera of yours. Not that I thought so much about it at the time, except to feel kind of shamefaced when I read Pen's letter saying she thought the picture just like me. But when I got to France, and after I was taken prisoner, I got to thinking about it. You know, over there, side by side with death, a fellow thinks about a lot of things that never bother his head at home. I used to look at that picture and wonder how in thunder you got that look on me, and why Pen thought it was my natural expression. I decided it must have been in me to come out even for that short time and Pen's belief in me challenged me to live up to it."

He named his sister almost reverently. "I've changed my views on a lot of things since I left home, and one of them is my duty to Pen. I realized over there how much I owed her, and what a rotter I was, and I made a solemn vow to God that if ever He allowed me to come back to her I'd be a different brother."

Penelope appeared in the door. "Bed-time, Jacky boy," she said with a quaint big-sisterly air which somehow seemed to rebound back from the big-shouldered chap who sprang up to place his arm around her shoulders.

"Don't you order me to bed, Madam," he said laughingly, "Don't you see that I'm a big boy now?"

Penelope emerged gasping from the bear hug to which he subjected her. "I believe you have grown up," she said.

Arm in arm they went up the two pairs of stairs. "Funny thing, Pen, but I've thought considerable about this room this last year. It used to come into my mind often, just as it looks now. The night I escaped, when I was lying in the ditch all under water except my nose to throw the hounds off the scent, this room kept coming before my eyes—the fireplace, the dormer window, just as it now. . . . I declare, Pen, it seems only the other day that I rushed out of here that last evening before we were entrained, and yet I feel ten years more a man."

When Penelope came back to the library, she went up to her husband's chair and settled herself cozily on the arm. "Happy, dear?" he asked, drawing her into the circle of his arm. "Happy? Oh, yes, so happy. God is good, isn't he?"

"Penelope," said Bishop, drawing her close and holding her there, "I believe, if such a thing were possible, that you love your brother more than your husband. I feel just a tiny bit jealous to-night."

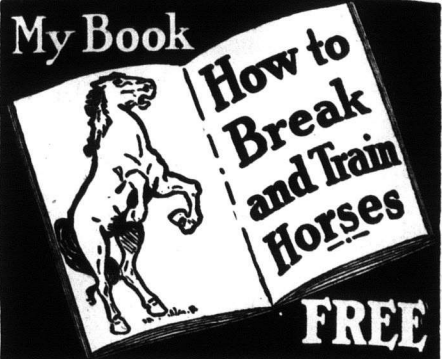
"Oh, no, dear, no. I have had Jack longer, that is all. You must remember you are new, yet, as compared with Jack. I love Jack like a mother—he is a dear boy—but, you, you old dear, don't you realize that I love you like—every—thing?"

There was silence then for awhile, both looking into the fire, and content with the nearness of each other and the stillness. Presently Penelope said drowsily, "He did come back just like I dreamed, just his old self, Norman, didn't he?"

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Friend—"For his aged mother?"

Juror—"Oh, no—for having such a lawyer."



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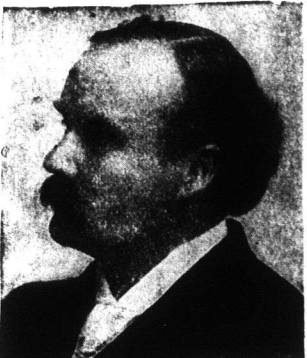
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