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His Family Story

It Explained About the Wreath on the Photograph

By F. A. MITCHEL

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While dining with my friends Jack Rathbone and his wife I noticed hanging on the wall a photograph of a young man about twenty-two years of age and, judging by his likeness, as fine looking a fellow as I ever saw. What struck me especially was a garland of fresh flowers running around the frame. I was thinking of asking about the original of the picture, when it occurred to me that I might be treading on some delicate subject, and I concluded to restrain my curiosity till I had Jack alone. His wife doesn't like tobacco smoke, so when the coffee was brought on she followed the custom of other days, when men were left to smoke alone after dinner, and excused herself. Soon after her departure I said to Jack:

"Who's the handsome man over there, Jack?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Well, in the first place it isn't usual, as you know, to decorate any one's pho-



"I'll do it for her—both of you,"
tograph unless there is some very special reason for it. Then the fresh flowers that encircle the frame give an impression one gets from seeing flowers on a grave. Furthermore, I am interested in the young man pictured there. The expression on the face indicates one of noble impulses, one capable of some remarkable act of magnanimity, some marvelous sacrifice. Then too—

"Stop!" Jack laid his hand on my arm. I turned from the photograph on which my eyes had rested while I was speaking to him and saw that he was moved by some overpowering emotion.

"I beg a thousand pardons for trespassing"—He stopped me again.

"That's all right," he said. "You haven't trespassed or intruded or done any harm. It is the correctness of the inferences you have drawn from the photograph that moved me. I wish Alice had been here while you were speaking."

My curiosity was all the more excited by the way my comments were received, but I dared not advance further in a matter at the bottom of which there was such deep feeling, so I waited for Jack to speak again. He was silent some time, during which he seemed to be framing something in his mind. Finally he said:

"I'm going to tell you a story."
"About the original of the picture?"
"Never mind the picture till I have finished my story. Then I'll need to explain anything. I shall use assumed names, partly because I wish you to draw your own inferences at the end and partly for other reasons which will appear to you."

"Ten years ago two students, chums, were preparing for graduation in a state university. One of them, John Harbeson, was an ordinary sort of fellow—that is, an average man without anything very good or very bad about him. The other, Treat Marshall, was a noticeable figure from the day he entered college. He was an athlete, and his interest in athletics interfered with his standing in his class so that he was not an honor man. Nevertheless such honors as his classmates could give him were heaped upon him."

"There was a girl in the place who caught the fancy of both chums. It isn't necessary for me to go into the details of the affair further than to say that neither of the young men knew the other was in love with her on whom he had set his heart. She was

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gracious to both and never told either the other's secret until she had accepted one of them. Then she said to him that she felt she should refuse him, for her acceptance of him would destroy the affection the two chums felt for each other.

"That was the summer of the Spanish-American war. As soon as Harbeson and Marshall finished their college course they took a train together for Tampa, Fla., where troops were collecting, and enlisted in a regiment about to sail for Cuba. It was Harbeson the girl had chosen, with that perversity of girls who when they choose for love alone pay little or no attention to that excellence which is recognized

by the world. Either they know better than the world in such matters, or they think they do, which is the same thing. At any rate, when a girl marries for love nobody knows what fine fellows she's going to pass over to take some one the rest of the world has but an ordinary use for. On their way to Tampa and from there to Santiago Harbeson felt as though he had been stealing from his chum, Marshall, on the other hand, didn't dream that Harbeson had won the girl who had turned him down.

"Perhaps he would have never known the secret if it hadn't been for the letters. The men hadn't been on the island very long when Marshall, who was delivering letters that had just arrived to members of his company, handed one the handwriting of which he recognized to Harbeson. When two or three more letters came with the same superscription Marshall knew that his friend had won the prize on which he had set his own heart.

"Of course Harbeson knew the secret was out, but his chum did not mention the matter to him and he couldn't make up his mind to mention it to his chum. He didn't know whether Marshall had turned against him or not. It was perfectly natural that the matter should bring about some constraint, but you see, Harbeson, not having made a clean breast of it in the first place, was accountable for this. As it was his friend felt obliged to ignore it."

"Strange to say, the events of a bloody and wearing campaign were not sufficient to obliterate this shadow that had fallen between these two friends. Harbeson couldn't feel guilty and assumed that Marshall, whom he dearly loved, blamed him. It didn't matter that Marshall failed to show that he blamed him or that he had changed toward him. All through the campaign Marshall suffered more from this position in which he had been placed than from the heat, the exposure, the dread of missiles and, more than all, the overhanging pall of epidemic.

"In one of the fights in which the chums were engaged their company was cut off from the rest of the command and most of the men taken pris-

oners. Some eight or ten of them managed to get away where they could hide either among trees, long grass or bushes, but they were hunted and instead of being made prisoners were shot down as they ran. Harbeson and Marshall never failed to stand by each other when it was possible. They were among the men who were trying to avoid capture and had got into a clump of bushes. By lying low they hoped the Spaniards would finally tire of the hunt or think they had found all the fugitives. But the outlook was discouraging. Every now and again they would see some one of their comrades make a dash for liberty, only to be shot down by the Spaniards, who paid no attention to any signal of surrender.

"Finally a Spanish soldier in proximity to the bushes where the friends were hiding was heard to say:

"There's one left, and he's hiding in here."

"Then it was evident that they were about to beat the bushes for their covey."

"John," said Marshall in a low voice, "I am going to run; you stay where you are!"

"You'll certainly be killed," replied his friend.

"But they think there's only one of us, and they'll leave you unnoticed."

"I protest!"

"John," said his friend, putting his hand on the other's arm, "I'll not only do it for you, I'll do it for her—both of you!"

"Marshall's words 'I'll do it for her' paralyzed action in Harbeson, who felt that he should die with his friend. He suffered Marshall to go out to his death that he might live."

Rathbone paused. He was right in saying that when he had finished his story there would be nothing to explain. It was plain that he was John Harbeson and was suffering and had doubtless for years suffered from a feeling that he should not have accepted this sacrifice. I could understand how the position in which he had been placed would affect a sensitive man.

I turned from him to look again at the photograph of the man who had given his life for him and the woman both loved. What I had seen in the picture before had been intensified by the story of his sacrifice.

And yet I could understand why Rathbone's wife had chosen him. Surely his modesty was very engaging. This sensitiveness at the position he occupied excited sympathy.

"Jack," I said, "your friend's sacrifice was noble, and I don't wonder that you and your wife adorn his picture with ever living flowers. But I fear your high sense of honor and your sensitiveness have somewhat marred your friend's gift. It is no fault of yours that you are the subject of his sacrifice. You should strive to throw off the pain connected with it, that it may have the effect that was intended."

"I have often thought of that," he replied gloomily. "It has appeared to me that I have been grudging him the opportunity of dying for us."

"And you must remember that had he been the winner in the game of love you might have been the one to make the sacrifice."

"I have often wondered if I would have made it."

"Certainly you would," I said encouragingly. "Now let us join your wife."

Going to the drawing room, we found Mrs. Rathbone. She cast a quick glance at her husband, and I saw by her expression that she knew he had been telling the story of the family. And I knew that her life work was to destroy the effect of a noble act upon a sensitive man.

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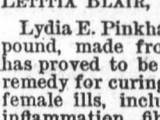
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The Conservatives of West Middlesex have nominated James Cobban, of Middlemiss, as candidate for the House of Commons, and Dr. H. A. Wilson, of Wardsville, was selected as candidate for the Provincial Legislature.

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What might have been a serious affair was a shooting affray on con. 9, Euphemia, at the home of Will Gould. A shot was fired by an unknown hand, which entered the front window of the dining room. Going through the house it lodged in a post of the back porch. Mrs. Gould had been sitting sewing a short time before, and was almost a victim of the shot.

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Hated at Watford, Ont., Feb. 21st, 1910.

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