

## The Great Good Heart of Corporal Dwight



WRITTEN SPECIALLY FOR THE WESTERN HOME MONTHLY



ORPORAL Teddy Dwight of the 7th Regiment was the most popular man in his company, and deservedly so. His hearty laugh, his amusing speeches, and his faculty for picking

up the newest songs and singing them in a good baritone voice to a rattling piano accompaniment, were all potent factors in insuring this popularity; and the general impression among his comrades was that the company would be a very lifeless organization were it not for the abundant jocularity of Teddy Dwight.

In one way Teddy was a paradox—a kind of happy family of earthly blessings. He had health and wealth in abundance—two desiderata rarely found together—and also a liberal allowance of cleverness and good looks, qualities that are usually regarded as deadly enemies. Laughing, light-hearted, and to all appearances entirely care free, he won for himself the affectionate appellation of "Joyous Ted," and was generally looked upon as among the blessed of the earth and the beloved of the gods.

This was Teddy Dwight, as he appeared in the company room, or on the various festive occasions when the men were gathered together. But there were those who contended that in the seclusion of his trim bachelor quarters, with his enormous cherry pipe clouding the air with fragrant wreaths of smoke, Teddy was not only melancholy, but absolutely morbid. Charley Keene, who knew him best, once confided to a few of us that on entering Teddy's room the night before he had discovered our little comrade on his knees by the divan, with his face in his hands, and big tears creeping out between his fingers. From this and other stories of a like nature arose an impression that Teddy had some secret sorrow; and naturally this imbued him with a peculiar interest. We all admired his self control, and wondered what the hidden thorn could be, little guessing in what a dramatic manner we were destined to witness its revelation.

I distinctly remember the night when Joyous Ted announced his engagement to Winifred Schuyler. She was a remarkably beautiful girl, a member of an old New York family, and accounted a brilliant match. And yet here and there there were dubious shakings of heads and whispered words of hope that she would make him happy, with so strong an emphasis on the "hope" as to convey serious doubts of the desire ever coming true.

Frankly, Miss Schuyler was reported to have no heart. She had broken three engagements, sending one man to South Africa, another to the dogs, and the third into politics, without a symptom of regret. Now Teddy was all heart, and a sensitive little chap, in spite of his careless ways; and it made us miserable to think what an effect such treatment might produce upon him.

He had the most strikingly original way of doing things, and the fashion in which he elected to announce his engagement was thoroughly characteristic of the man. The first sergeant had just dismissed the company, and we were all turning to our lockers, when Teddy stepped forward and remarked in a loud voice that he had a few words to say. There was a general hush, in the midst of which Teddy stood looking about him with a smile that seemed to meet behind his ears.

"Well," he said, "I'm engaged to Miss Winifred Schuyler, and I want to mark the event. There's some punch over at my rooms, and no end of tobacco, and every man has to come over and celebrate," and he burst into a mighty shout of laughter, in which we all joined with much cheering and

slapping of his fat shoulders.

The celebration was an immense success. Teddy sang all his latest songs, danced breakdowns, and enjoyed himself hugely. Some of us noticed that in spite of his rapturous rejoicings he did not once touch the punch, although he was very liberal with it, as well as with his cigars, which were short and fat, and altogether had much the same appearance as their owner. Charley Keene said that during the past year Teddy had been a total abstainer. We puzzled over it somewhat, but Joyous Ted fell upon us with a whoop, and we were whirled off to join in the chorus of the next song. We remembered the circumstance of his not drinking when later events supplied an explanation.

That was in February, if I remember rightly, and Teddy seemed to grow happier with each succeeding hour. Miss Schuyler was wearing a magnificent hoop of diamonds on her finger, and he used to walk up and down the avenue with her every day, his short legs twinkling along, and his round eyes beaming with joy.

Some time in May there was a celebration in honor of the dedication of the Washington Arch, and the Seventh paraded in all the glory of full dress uniform. It was a blistering hot day, with the pavements like the top of a range, and a great swarm of people banked up on both sides of the avenue to see the troops. We swung along at a rattling pace, with only a momentary halt or two, until about Seventeenth or Eighteenth Street, when something blocked the head of the column, and we all came to a standstill, and had a chance to look about us and cool off a bit.

Teddy was the fourth man from the left of the second platoon—a position assigned him as a tribute to his small stature. He was a prodigiously funny spectacle at that moment, with his round, red face beaded with perspiration like the outside of a tumbler of ice water. Most of the company were looking and laughing at him; and Joyous Ted relegated his discomfort to a secondary place, and gave free rein to his powers of repartee. Metaphorically he bowled over one after another of his adversaries, and the spectators were enjoying the exhibition immensely. Then something strange happened.

A hoarse voice from somewhere in the throng on the sidewalk shouted "Edward Dwight!" very distinctly. It was so clearly and unmistakably intended for our comrade that the chaffing ceased instantly, everyone turning to discover the speaker. I was standing near Teddy, and had a quick intuition that something was wrong when I saw him wince and throw his hand, palm outward, before his eyes, as though avoiding a blow.

He did not look up as the author of the interruption pushed his way through the crowd and stood before him, but remained with his head bent and his lips drawn in till his mouth looked like a thin red line.

The man who had spoken was as disreputable a specimen of humanity as could well be imagined. His face was bloated by the telltale stamp of drink, his clothes soiled and shabby to the last degree, his eyes mere red blots beneath shaggy brows. Standing with his legs far apart he swayed to and fro, and regarded Teddy with the veriest wreck of a smile.

"E'ward," he said, "doan' sher know me? Why doan' sher speak to me?" Teddy's comrades had gathered close about the two men, surveying their faces curiously.

"Doan' sher know me?" repeated the man, adding, "damn yer," half to himself.

Teddy appeared to gather himself together with an effort. "I know you—yes," he answered. "What do you want here? Go back on the sidewalk."

The other's face showed that he did



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