

pressed. Convulsive spasms chased themselves, at intervals, from the very tips of his upstanding hair to his feet. His lips, dry and white and wide apart, twitched idiotically, while a lump rose occasionally in his throat, and dropped with a horrid gulp. He was the very embodiment of fear.

A white froth circled his pallid lips as he vainly struggled for speech. As the sergeant ran to him and hastily dashed some whiskey down the gaping throat, he burst out:

"Fire! Fire! Do you not see it?"

His voice was hoarse, his lips were parched, and the lines of fear seemed chisled into his face. The sergeant sprang to his side:—

"Where?" he asked.

"There! There! from the rifle! Blue and green and red flames flaring up. Oh, my God!"

The sergeant's voice was calm and even as patting him encouragingly upon the back, "Where, Christie, my man?" he asked again.

Christie glanced, an agonized, entreating glance, upon the sergeant's kindly face.

"There"—but as Christie's eyes came back to the muzzle no flame was there.

The knowledge of what he had done came o'er him in a wave. The moment's distraction had been enough to draw his frenzied mind somewhat from its aggravation. A brief second served to dispel the illusion of his fevered brain. As he realized his position a dry sob rose in his throat and a fierce spasm tore his frame. He sank exhausted to the ground muttering inarticulate dribble.

The ambulance corps was quickly on the spot, and the limp, lifeless form was hurriedly removed to the hospital. For days the doctors worked and watched with grim determination. Always were watchful nurses near, with quick restoratives.

"His nervous system" said the doctor "is almost completely shattered. It will take months of the most careful watching and constant care before his complete recovery. The most hopeful sign is his complete forgetfulness of the disastrous incident that placed him

here. Some day he may remember, and then—but—ah, well; we must always hope for the best."

That was precisely what happened. He did remember.

His sister had been telegraphed for on one of the occasions when Death's grim arm had almost rearhed the feeble form, and its grewsome fingers were almost closed upon his languid life. Her tender care had nursed him successfully through more than one impending crisis, and her loving care had made the long hours less tedious than they would have been. And now, on his approaching convalescence, her hearty laugh and cheery ways went far towards keeping his mind from brooding on himself, which the doctors knew, was to be greatly feared. Together they talked of happy days gone by, and days as happy yet to come; of home and friends; of mad exploits of schoolboy days; of conquests on athletic fields and other conquests yet more real, that both had gloried in. And ever was the happy hour approaching nearer day by day, when he should see, without confine, the vault of heaven, stretching blue, and feel the south breeze kiss his cheek with soft love touch ecstatic sweet, kept constant in their minds.

At last one evening the doctor informed them that, in his opinion, fresh air and sunshine were now necessary for the patient, and ordered him to sit, well wrapped up, to guard against any possible chill, on the sunny balcony of the south facade. At the delightful news joy filled both their hearts. Miss Christie laughed and sang with joyous glee, and brightened many a poor patient's lonely day by her light-hearted "chat." As she left in the evening she cautioned Christie to take the best of care, as she would surely be with him on the morrow's afternoon, when he was first to see the sun-lit outside world for so long a time.

It was midnight when Christie was awakened by the nurse, to take his medicine. As he thought of the coming day, sleep fled, and woo it as he might would not return. He counted the strokes as the town clock changed

the hours, and lay, patiently dreaming, the intervals between. At two the surgeon and an officer went the rounds of the wards. Christie watched their forms approach in the vague light. They stopped beside his bed.

"Curious case," said the surgeon.

"Very," assented the captain.

"The most remarkable nervous trouble I've met in years" said the surgeon as he wiped his glasses and looked with complacency upon the result of his labor.

"When a man sees fire coming from his rifle just as he is about to face the enemy, and when he knows that not even a blank cartridge is there, there is something more than nerves the matter. A regular blue funk is what I would call it. The nerve business is all show."

They moved away, but the mischief was done. That night in the barrack-yard came back to Christie with vivid realism. The thoughts of how his comrades would look down upon him for his cowardice stung him to the very heart. And he knew that the story would spread like wild fire, growing as it spread. He saw that for years to come the stigma of shame would stick to him. Heroic deeds he might indeed do, but still this first great shame would stay. All the thoughts that had troubled him on that disastrous night surged thro his mind once more. He felt that a life, such as he would have to lead henceforth, was hardly to be borne. He was not brave enough to bear it. He was even coward enough to die. He reached out and grasped a medicine bottle. He knew what it contained—laudanum. He was only afraid that there would not be enough for his purpose. He wondered vaguely what his sister would say, and what those who thought him afraid to die by an enemy's hand would think when they found him brave enough to die by his own.

He had become so pleased with himself during these ruminations that he was almost about to put the bottle away when he heard the footsteps of the surgeon coming back alone. Then as he remembered what the captain