

DECORATION DAY



A Memorial Day Reunion.

By GILBERTE HOLT.



BUSINESS had brought him to his native town in the sunny south. He was in haste that his mission should be concluded so that he might get away from the quiet, sleepy village. The very beauty of its fragrant spring dress saddened him.

In a timid, hesitating way he had made a few inquiries for old friends, but the answer was ever the same. War had scattered most of the old families. Those alone remained who slept in the peaceful cemetery in the dip which formed a vale at the bend in the river.

"And the Ralstons?"
All were gone. Of the impetuous, high spirited family, only Miss Erma was still alive. The Ralstons boys—four of them—lay in soldiers' graves beside their gallant father.

Mrs. Ralston had seen her brave boys brought home dead one by one. But she gave them for her country's sake, gladly, but her heart was slowly breaking. She did not long survive her husband.

"Did Miss Erma still live at Ironwood?"
No. The old plantation was desolate and Miss Ralston lived in a little white cottage down the road, the one almost smothered in jasmine red roses.

The gentleman took his cane and with a brisk step which told of some young blood still flowing in his veins, started down the street in the warm spring sunshine. The square shoulders, erect head and firm tread all bespoke the soldier.

As he came in sight of Miss Erma's house his steady walk became jerky and finally settled into an uncertain amble. For the fraction of a second he paused at her gate, then beat a hasty and confused retreat. Completely out of breath he drew up beside the high arched gate which opened upon the soldiers' last tenting ground.

"By Jove! It's no use. I couldn't face her," and the old man mopped his brow. "Whew, how her eyes did blaze! Facing a cannon is play to standing the fire of Erma's angry eyes."
He leaned against the post. The light died out of his face and he thought of that long away time when he and Erma had been lovers. And then came the war. How quickly had followed that awful day when he went to say farewell and she would not look at him, because he wore the hated blue. He tried to argue, tried to persuade, but she would not listen.

The dreadful war should deprive her of her lover, without calling him to fight against instead of for her?

How clearly he could see her as she stood then on the low, wide steps, a slim, girlish figure clad in clinging white. Her cheeks were flushed and her mouth tremulous, but the chin was firmly set. All through the war he had carried in his heart the memory of her as she stood in the sunshine, framed by the stately pillars of the gallery; while he, with despair in his heart, but a dogged determination in his eyes, turned, when half way down the broad avenue of live oaks, and lifting his union cap murmured, "God keep my southern sweetheart!"

How often he recalled her words. He could almost hear them now. "Go, you are a traitor. I never want to see your face again."

The old man shook his head sorrowfully. No, she would never forgive him, not even now after all these years. Well, he would go back north on the morrow, so what matter?

He and the Ralston boys had been college students together. He would pay a visit to their last resting place. He opened the gate and slowly made his way among the flower-covered mounds. When he reached the Ralston lot, he looked about him sorrowfully. He felt sadly desolate. He alone was left of all those merry, laughing fellows.

Presently his eye wandered to a grave somewhat apart from the rest. The scarcity of its flowers drew his attention to it. He wandered idly toward it, thinking, "Some poor friendless chap."

He started and then dropped upon his knees in his eagerness to read the simple inscription on the headstone. It ran:

"MERRILL FREMONT."
"Born 1838. Killed at Gettysburg, 1863."

"Why, that's my name!" and the old man looked about him in a dazed manner as though for a moment he doubted his identity.

"Yes, my name is Merrill Fremont and I was born in '38, but though I was wounded I did not die at Gettysburg. A union soldier in a confederate graveyard. Ah, that accounted for the lack of memorial flowers," and he smiled grimly. "But I'm not dead," and he thumped his cane vigorously upon the gravel path.

He leaned his hands on his stick and stood gazing intently at his own name.

"It isn't me—but it is some union soldier buried for me, and he shall have some flowers. Yes, I'll decorate my own grave," and with a chuckle Merrill Fremont started briskly down the path.

Merrill Fremont paused, but in hand Erma believed him dead and forgave him. How would it be when she found him alive? He stood in dumb uncertainty. She was his only love and to lose her again would be more terrible than not to have found her. Dead, she surely loved him; her action proved it. Would he not better go away in the certainty of that love than, by staying, perhaps revive the old bitterness which his return to her unharmed while all her beloved family lay dead, might recall?

He was about to retreat. It was too late, the lady turned and saw him. He stood awkwardly before her. She looked at him in puzzled inquiry.

Suddenly he cried out "Erma."
She moved back a pace in surprise at being so addressed by an apparent stranger.

Once his tongue loosened Merrill gave her no chance to escape. In quick, incoherent words he poured forth the



SUDDENLY HE CRIED OUT, "ERMA."

mistaken report of his death, his love, his sorrow for her grief, and at last an earnest plea that she would prove more kind than in the past.

As she listened a delicate flush crept into the lady's pale, sweet face. The shadow that rested in the deep, blue eyes lifted. She looked searchingly at the man before her. Could this really be her young lover, returned in the guise of this impetuous elderly man? She had never thought of him save as the soldier boy who had gone away at her bidding. At last she seemed to understand. For a moment the corners of the lovely mouth forgot to droop.

By the light of memory the man and woman grew young again.

When his torrent of words ceased she stood silent for some moments, and then held out her hand as she softly said: "We banish our anger forever. When we laurel the graves of our dead."

How He Won Her.
"If I were a man," she said, "you would not find me here today. I'd be away, fighting for my country."
"If you were a man," he replied, "you wouldn't find me here today either. I, too, would be away fighting for my country."

After that all he had to do was to gain papa's consent.—Cleveland Leader.

PHANTOM SHIP

—OR—
The Flying Dutchman.

—BY CAPTAIN MARRYAT.

CHAPTER XXIII.
"I have then seen him," said Philip, after he had lain down on the sofa in the cabin for some minutes to recover himself, while Amine bent over him. "I have at last seen him. Amine! Can you doubt now?"

"No, Philip; I have now no doubt," replied Amine, mournfully; "but take courage, Philip."

"For myself, I want not courage—but for you, Amine—you know that his appearance portends a mischief that will surely come."

"Let it come," replied Amine calmly; "I have long been prepared for it, and so have you."

"Yes, for myself; but not for you."
"You have been wrecked often, and have been saved; then why should not I?"

"But the sufferings."
"Those suffer least who have most courage to bear up against them. I am but a woman, weak and frail in body, but I trust I have that within me which will not make you feel ashamed of Amine. No, Philip, you will have no walling; no expression of despair from Amine's lips; if she can console you, she will; if she can assist you, she will; but come what may, if she cannot serve you, at least she will prove no burden to you."

"Your presence in misfortune would unnerve me, Amine."
"It shall not; it shall add to your resolution. Let fate do its worst."

"Depend upon it, Amine, that will be ere long."
"Be it so," replied Amine. "But, Philip, it were as well you showed yourself on deck; the men are frightened and your absence will be observed."

"You are right," said Philip; and rising and embracing her, he left the cabin.

Philip, on his return to the deck, found the crew of the vessel in great consternation. Krantz himself appeared bewildered—he had not forgotten the appearance of the Phantom ship off Desolation harbor, and the vessels following her to their destruction. This second appearance, more awful than the former, quite unmanned him; and when Philip came out of the cabin he was leaning in gloomy silence against the weather bulkhead.

"We shall never reach port again, sir," said he to Philip, as he came up to him.

"Silence! silence! The men may hear you."
"It matters not; they think the same," replied Krantz.

"But they are wrong," replied Philip, turning to the seamen. "My lads, that some disaster may happen to us after the appearance of this vessel is most probable; I have seen her before more than once, and disasters did then happen; but here I am, alive and well; therefore it does not prove that we cannot escape as I have before done. We must do our best and trust in heaven. The gale is breaking fast, and in a few hours we shall have fine weather. I have met this Phantom ship before, and care not how often I meet it again. Mr. Krantz, get up the spirits—the men have had hard work and must be fatigued."

The very prospect of obtaining liquor appeared to give courage to the men; they hastened to obey the order, and the quantity served out was sufficient to give courage to the most fearful and induce others to defy old Vanderdecken and his whole crew of imps. The next morning the weather was fine, the sea smooth and the Utrecht went gayly on her voyage.

Many days of gentle breezes and favorable winds, gradually wore off the panic occasioned by the supernatural appearance; and if not forgotten it was referred to either in jest or with indifference. They now had run through the Straits of Malacca, and entered the Polynesian archipelago. Philip's orders were to refresh and call for instructions at the small island of Bo-ton, then in possession of the Dutch. They arrived there in safety, and after remaining two days, again sailed on their voyage, intending to make their passage between the Celebes and the island of Galago. The weather was still clear and the wind light; they proceeded cautiously, on account of the reefs and currents, and with a careful watch for the piratical vessels which have for centuries infested those seas; but they were not molested, and had gained well up among the islands to the north of Galago when it fell calm, and the vessel was borne to the eastward of it by the current. The calm lasted several days, and they could procure no anchorage; at last they found themselves among the cluster of islands near to the northern coast of New Guinea.

The anchor was dropped and the sails furled for the night; a drizzling rain came on, the weather was thick, and watches were stationed in every part of the ship, that they might not be surprised by the pirate proas, for the current ran past the ship at the rate of eight or nine miles per hour, and these vessels, if hid among the islands, might sweep down upon them unperceived.

It was 12 o'clock at night when Philip, who was in bed, was awakened by a shock; he thought it might be a proa running alongside, and he started from his bed and ran out. He found

Krantz, who had been awakened by the same cause, running up undressed. Another shock succeeded, and the ship careened to port. Philip then knew that the ship was on shore.

The thickness of the night prevented them from ascertaining where they were, but the lead was thrown over the side and they found that they were lying on shore on a sand-bank, with not more than fourteen feet of water on the deepest side, and that they were broadside on with a strong current pressing them further up on the bank; indeed, the current ran like a mill-race, and each minute they were swept into shallow water.

On examination they found that the ship had dragged her anchor, which, with the cable, was still taut from the starboard bow, but this did not appear to prevent the vessel from being swept further up on the bank. It was supposed that the anchor had parted at the shank, and another anchor was let go.

Nothing more could be done till day-break, and impatiently did they wait till the next morning. As the sun rose the mist cleared away, and they discovered that they were on shore on a sand-bank, a small portion of which was above water, and round which the current ran with great impetuosity. About three miles from them was a cluster of small islands with cocoa trees growing on them, but with no appearance of inhabitants.

"I fear we have little chance," observed Krantz to Philip. "If we lighten the vessel the anchor may not hold, and we shall be swept further on, and it is impossible to lay out an anchor against the force of this current."

"At all events we must try; but I grant that our situation is anything but satisfactory. Send all the hands aft."

The men came aft, gloomy and dispirited.

"My lads," said Philip, "why are you disheartened?"
"We are doomed, sir; we knew it would be so."

"I thought it probable that the ship would be lost—I told you so—but the loss of the ship does not involve that of the ship's company—may, it does not follow that the ship is to be lost, although she may be in great difficulty, as she is at present. What fear is there for us, my men? The water is smooth—we have plenty of time before us; we can make a raft and take to our boats; it never blows among these islands, and we have land close under our lee. Let us first try what we can do with the ship; if we fail, we must then take care of ourselves."

The men caught at the idea and went to work willingly; the water casks were started, the pumps set going, and everything that could be spared was thrown over to lighten the ship; but the anchor still dragged, from the strength of the current and bad holding ground, and Philip and Krantz perceived that they were swept further on the bank.

Night came on before they quitted their toil, and then a fresh breeze sprang up and created a swell, which occasioned the vessel to beat on the hard sand; thus did they continue until the next morning. At daylight the men resumed their labors, and the pumps were again manned to clear the vessel of the water which had been started, but after a time they pumped up sand. This told them that a plank had started, and that their labors were useless; the men left their work, but Philip again encouraged them, and pointed out that they could easily save themselves, and all that they had to do was to construct a raft which would hold provisions for them, and receive that portion of the crew who could not be taken into the boats.

After some repose the men again set to work; the topsails were struck, the yards lowered down and the raft was commenced under the lee of the vessel, where the strong current was checked. Philip, recollecting his former disaster, took great pains in the construction of this raft, and aware that as the water and provisions were expended, there would be no occasion to tow so heavy a mass, he constructed it in two parts, which might easily be severed, and thus the boats would have less to tow, as soon as circumstances would enable them to part with one of them.

CHAPTER XXIV.
Night again terminated their labors, and the men retired to rest, the weather continuing fine, with very little wind. By noon the next day the raft was complete; water and provisions were safely stowed on board; a secure and dry place was fitted up for Amine in the center of one portion; spare ropes, sails and everything which could prove useful, in case of their being forced on shore, were put in. Muskets and ammunition were also provided, and everything was ready, when the men came aft and pointed out to Philip that there was plenty of money on board, which it was folly to leave, and that they wished to carry as much as they could away with them. As this intimation was given in a way that made it evident they intended it should be complied with, Philip did not refuse; but resolved in his own mind that when they arrived at a place where he could exercise his authority,

the money, should be reclaimed by the company to whom it belonged. The men went down below, and while Philip was making arrangements with Amine, handed the casks of dollars out of the hold, broke them open and helped themselves—contributing with each other for the first possession as each cask was opened. At last every man had obtained as much as he could carry, and had placed his spoil on the raft, with his baggage, or in the boat to which he had been appointed. All was now ready—Amine was lowered down and took her station; the boats took in tow the raft, which was cast off from the vessel, and away they went with the current, pulling with all their strength to avoid being stranded upon that part of the sandbank which appeared above the water. This was the great danger which they had to encounter, and which they very narrowly escaped.

They numbered eighty-six souls in all; in the boats there were thirty-two; the rest were on the raft, which, being well built and full of timber, floated high out of the water, now that the sea was so smooth. It had been agreed upon by Philip and Krantz that one of them should remain on the raft and the other in one of the boats; but at the time the raft quitted the ship they were both on the raft, as they wished to consult, as soon as they discovered the direction of the current, which would be the most advisable course for them to pursue. It appeared that as soon as the current had passed the bank it took a more southerly direction toward New Guinea. It was then debated between them whether they should or should not land on that island, the natives of which were known to be pusillanimous yet treacherous. A long debate ensued, which ended, however, in their resolving not to decide as yet, but wait and see what might occur. In the meantime the boats pulled to the westward, while the current set them fast down in a southerly direction.

Night came on and the boats dropped the grapnels with which they had been provided, and Philip was glad to find that the current was not near so strong and the grapnels held both boats and raft. Covering themselves up with the spare sails with which they had provided themselves and setting a watch, the three seamen were soon fast asleep.

"Had I not better remain in one of the boats?" observed Krantz. "Suppose, to save ourselves, the boats were to leave the raft?"

"I have thought of that," replied Philip, "and have therefore not allowed any provisions or water in the boats; they will not leave us for that reason."

"True; I had forgotten that."
Krantz remained on watch, and Philip retired to the repose which he so much needed. Amine met him with open arms.

"I have no fear, Philip," said she; "I rather like this wild, adventurous change. We will go on shore and build our hut beneath the cocoa trees and I shall rejoice when the day comes which brings succor and releases us from our desert isle. What do I require but you?"

"We are in the hands of One above, dear, who will act with us as He pleases. We have to be thankful that it is no worse," replied Philip. "But now to rest, for I shall soon be obliged to watch."

(To be continued.)

KAFFIR'S ANTIDOTE.

Which Made Serpent's Venom Harmless.
A road party, comprising the usual gang of from fifty to sixty Kaffirs, was employed, says a writer in the London Spectator, on the construction of a road in the Tugela valley, Natal, about thirty or more years ago. In the course of their work they came upon a huge stone which it was necessary to remove, but beneath it was the home of a large black mamba, well known to the neighboring inhabitants as being old and, therefore, very venomous. The mamba is the most deadly of the South African snakes, and the superintendent anticipated some trouble over that rock. He offered a bribe for the snake's skin, and the gang "wow'd!" and sat down to "bema gwi" (take snuff). But a slim youth sauntered forward and, amid the jeers and protestations of the rest, declared himself equal to the task. He took from his neck what looked like a bit of shriveled stick, chewed it, swallowed some of it, spat out the rest on his hands and proceeded to rub his glistening brown body and limbs all over. Then taking up his stick and chanting a song of defiance he advanced with great confidence and swagger to the boulder. There he roused up the mamba, which, in great fury at being disturbed, bit him in the hip. The boy took no notice of the bite, but broke the snake's back with his stick and, bringing it to his master, asked for his reward, obtaining which he went back to his work, and the bite of the reptile had no effect upon him whatever. No bribe, not even that of a cow (better than any gold in the eyes of a Kaffir) would induce the native to disclose the secret of his antidote, which, he said, had been handed down in his family for generations. The snake was a very long one, and so big that it had a mane. It is a well-known fact that certain of the Zulus have antidotes for the more deadly snake poisons, which they preserve as a secret within their own families.

In Dire Distress.
Weary Watkins—"I ain't had nothin' to eat for two days—"
Victim—"You told me that very same story just a week ago."
Oh, then, surely you would help a pore bloke 'at ain't had nothin' ter eat for nine days."—Answers.