

THE SEARCH

By Grace Livingston Hill-Lutz
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A friend who understood her, and whom she could understand. That was what she had always wanted and what she had never quite had with any of her young associates. One or two had approached to that, but always there had been a point at which they had fallen short. That she should make this man her friend whose letter crackled in her pocket, in that intimate sense of the word, did not occur to her even now. He was somehow set apart for service in her mind; and as such she had chosen him to be her special knight, she to be the lady to whom he might look for encouragement—whose honor he was going forth to defend. It was a misty dreamy ideal of a thought. Somehow she would not have picked out any other of her boy friends to be a knight for her. They were too flippant, too careless and light hearted. The very way in which they lighted their multitudinous cigars and flipped the match away gave impression that they were going to have the time of their lives in this war. They might have patriotism down at the bottom of all this froth and boasting, doubtless they had; but there was so little seriousness about them that one would never think of them as knights, defenders of some great cause of righteousness. Perhaps she was all wrong. Perhaps it was only her old baby fancy for the little boy who could always "lick" the other boys and save the girls from trouble that prejudiced her in his favor, but at least it was pleasant and a great relief to know that her impulsive letter had not been misunderstood.

The girls prattled of this one and that who were "going over" soon, told of engagements and marriages soon to occur; criticized the brides and grooms to be; declared their undying opinions about what was fitting for a war bride to wear; and whether they would like to marry a man who had to go right into war and might return minus an arm or an eye. They discoursed about the U-boats with a frothy cheerfulness that made Ruth shudder; and in the same breath told what nice eyes a young captain had who had recently visited the town, and what perfectly lovely uniforms he wore. They argued with serious zeal whether a girl should wear an olive drab suit this year if she wanted to look really smart.

They were the girls among whom she had been brought up, and Ruth was used to their froth, but somehow today it bored her beyond expression. She was glad to make an excuse to get away and she drove her little car around by the way of John Cameron's home hoping perhaps to get a glimpse of his mother again. But the house had a shut up look behind the vine that he had trained, as if it were lonely and lying back in a long wait till he should come—or not come! A pang went through her heart. For the first time she thought what it meant for a young life like that to be silenced by cold steel. The home empty! The mother alone! His ambitions and hopes unfulfilled! It came to her, too, that if he were her knight he might have to die for her—for his cause! She shuddered and swept the unpleasant thought away, but it had left its mark and would return again.

On the way back she passed a number of young soldiers home on 24-hour leave from the nearby camps. They saluted most eagerly, and she knew that any one of them would have gladly occupied the vacant seat in her car, but she was not in the mood to talk with them. She felt that there was something to be thought out and fixed in her mind, some impression that life had for her that afternoon that she did not want to lose in the mild fritter of gay banter that would be sure to follow if she stopped and took home some of the boys. So she bowed graciously and swept by at a high speed as if in a great hurry. The war! The war! It was beating itself into her brain again in much the same way it had done on that morning when the drafted men went away, only now it had taken on a more personal touch. She kept seeing the lonely vineclad house where that one soldier had lived, and which he had left so desolate. She kept thinking how many such homes and mothers

there must be in the land.

That evening when she was free to go to her room she read John Cameron's letter again, and then, feeling almost as if she were childish in her haste, she sat down and wrote an answer. Somehow that second reading made her feel his wish for an answer. It seemed mute appeal that she could not resist.

When John Cameron received that letter and the accompanying package he was lifted into the seventh heaven for a little while. He forgot all his misgivings, he even forgot Lieutenant Wainwright who had but that day become a most formidable foe, having been transferred to Cameron's company, where he was liable to be commanding officer in absence of the captain, and where frequent salutes would be inevitable. It had been a terrible blow to Cameron. But now it suddenly seemed a small matter. He put on his new sweater and swelled around the way the other boys did, letting them all admire him. He examined the wonderful socks almost reverently, putting a large curious finger gently on the red and blue stripes and thrilling with the thought that her fingers had plied the needles in those many, many stitches to make them. He almost felt it would be sacrilege to wear them, and he laid them away most carefully and locked them into the box under his bed lest some other fellow should admire and desire them to his loss. But with the letter he walked away into the woods as far as the bounds of the camp would allow and read and reread it, rising at last from it as one refreshed from a comforting meal after long fasting. It was on the way back to his barracks that night, walking slowly under the starlight, not desiring to be back until the last minute before night taps because he did not wish to break the wonderful evening he had spent with her, that he resolved to try to get leave the next Saturday and go home to thank her.

Back in the barracks with the others he fairly scintillated with wit and kept his comrades in roars of laughter until the officer of the night suppressed them summarily. But long after the others were asleep he lay thinking of her, and listening to the singing of his soul as he watched a star that twinkled with a friendly gleam through a crack in the roof above his cot. Once again there came the thought of God, and a feeling of gratitude for this lovely friendship in his life. If he knew where God was he would like to thank Him. Lying so and looking up to the star he breathed from his heart a wordless thanksgiving.

The next night he wrote and told her he was coming, and asked permission to call and thank her face to face. Then he fairly haunted the post office at mail time the rest of the week hoping for an answer. He had not written his mother about his coming, for he meant not to go this week if there came no word from Ruth. Besides, it would be nice to surprise his mother. Then there was some doubt about his getting a pass anyway, and so between the two anxieties he was kept busy up to the last minute. But Friday evening he got his pass, and in the last mail came a special delivery from Ruth, just a brief note saying she had been away from home when his letter arrived, but she would be delighted to see him on Sunday afternoon as he had suggested.

He felt like a boy let loose from school as he brushed up his uniform and polished his big army shoes while his less fortunate companions kidded him about the girl he was going to see. He denied their thrusts joyously, in his heart repudiating any such personalities, yet somehow it was pleasant. He had never realized how pleasant it would be to have a girl and be going to see her—such a girl! Of course, she was not for him—not with that possessiveness. But she was a friend, a real friend, and he would not let anything spoil the pleasure of that!

He had not thought anything in his army experience could be so exciting as that first ride back home again. Somehow the deference paid to his uniform got into his blood and made him feel that people all along the line really did care for what the boys

were doing for them. It made camp life and hardships seem less dreary.

It was great to get back to his little mother and put his big arms around her again. She seemed so small. Had she shrunken since he left her or was she grown so much huskier with the out of door life? Both, perhaps, and he looked at her sorrowfully. She was so little and quiet and brave to bear life all alone. If he only could get back and get to succeeding in life so that he might make some brightness for her. She had borne so much, and she ought not to have looked so old and worn at her age! For a brief instant again his heart was almost bitter, and he wondered what God meant by giving his good little mother so much trouble. Was there a God when such things could be? He resolved to do something about finding out this very day.

It was pleasant to help his mother about the kitchen, saving her as she had not been saved since he left, telling her about the camp, and listening to her tearful admiration of him. She could scarcely take her eyes from him, he seemed so tall and big and handsome in his uniform; he appeared so much older and more manly than her heart yearned for her boy who seemed to be slipping away from her. It was so heavenly blessed to sit down beside him and sew on a button and mend a torn spot in his flannel shirt and have him pat her shoulder now and then contentedly.

Then with pride she sent him down to the store for something nice for dinner, and watched him through the window with a smile, the tears running down her cheeks. How tall and straight he walked! How like his father when she first knew him! She hoped the neighbors all were looking out and would see him. Her boy! Her soldier boy! And he must go away from her, perhaps to die!

But—he was here today! She would not think of the rest. She would rejoice now in his presence.

He walked briskly down the street past the houses that had been familiar all his life, meeting people who had never been wont to notice him before; and they smiled upon him from afar now, greeted him with enthusiasm, and turned to look after him as he passed on. It gave him a curious feeling to have so much attention from people who had never known him before. It made him feel strangely small, yet filled with a great pride and patriotism for the country that was his, and the government which he now represented to them all. He was something more to them now than just one of the boys about town who had grown up among them. He was a soldier of the United States. He had given his life for the cause of righteousness. The bitterness he might have felt at their former ignoring of him, was all swallowed up in their genuine and hearty friendliness.

He met the white-haired minister, kindly and dignified, who paused to ask him how he liked camp life and to commend him as a soldier; and looking in his strong gentle face John Cameron remembered his resolve.

He flashed a keen look at the gracious countenance and made up his mind to speak:

"I'd like to ask you a question, Dr. Thurlow. It's been bothering me quite a little ever since this matter of going away to fight has been in my mind. Is there any way that a man—that I can find God? That is, if there is a God. I've never thought much about it before, but life down there in camp makes a lot of things seem different, and I've been wondering. I'm not sure what I believe. Is there anyway I can find out?"

A pleasant gleam of surprise and delight thrilled into the deep blue eyes of the minister. It was startling. It almost embarrassed him for a moment, it was so unexpected to have a soldier ask a question about God. It was almost mortifying that he had never thought it worth while to take the initiative on that question with the young man.

"Why, certainly!" he said heartily. "Of course, of course. I'm very glad to know you are interested in those things. Couldn't you come in to my study and talk with me. I think I could help you. I'm sure I could."

"I haven't much time," said Cameron shyly, half ashamed now that he had opened his heart to an almost stranger. He was not even his mother's minister, and he was a comparative newcomer in the town. How had he

come to speak to him so impulsively?

"I understand, exactly, of course," said the minister with growing eagerness. "Could you come in now for five or 10 minutes? I'll turn back with you and you can stop on your way, or we can talk as we go. Were you thinking of uniting with the church? We have our communion the first Sunday of next month. I should be very glad if you could arrange. We have a number of young people coming in now. I'd like to see you come with them. The church is a good safe place to be. It was established by God. It is a school in which to learn of Him. It is—"

"But I'm not what you would call a Christian!" protested Cameron. "I don't even know that I believe in the Bible. I don't know what your church believes. I don't have a very definite idea what any church believes. I would be a hypocrite to stand up and join a church when I wasn't sure there was a God."

"My dear young fellow!" said the minister affectionately, "Not at all! Not at all! The church is the place for young people to come when they have doubts. It is a shelter, and a growing place. Just trust yourself to God and come in among His people and your doubts will vanish. Don't worry about doubts. Many people have doubts. Just let them alone and put yourself in the right way and you will forget them. I should be glad to talk with you further. I would like to see you come into communion with God's people. If you want to find God you should come where He has promised to be. It is a great thing to have a fine young fellow like you, and a soldier, array himself on the side of God. I would like to see you stand up on the right side before you go out to meet danger and perhaps death."

John Cameron stood watching him as he talked.

"He's a good old guy," he thought gravely, "but he doesn't get my point. He evidently believes what he says, but I don't just see going blindfolded into a church. However, there's something to what he says about going where God is if I want to find Him."

Out loud he merely said: "I'll think about it, Doctor, and perhaps come in to see you the next time I'm home." Then he excused himself and went on to the store.

As he walked away he said to himself:

"I wonder what Ruth Macdonald would say if I asked her the same question? I wonder if she has thought about it? I wonder if I'd ever have the nerve to ask her?"

The next morning he suggested to his mother that they go to Doctor Thurlow's church together. She would have very much preferred going to her own church with him, but she knew that he did not care for the minister and had never been very friendly with the people, so she put aside her secret wish and went with him. To tell the truth she was very proud to go any where with her handsome soldier son, and one thing that made her the more willing was that she remembered that the Macdonalds always went to the Presbyterian church, and perhaps they would be there today and Ruth would see them. But she said not a word of this to her boy.

John spent most of the time with his mother. He went up to college for an hour or so Saturday evening, dropping in on his fraternity for a few minutes and realizing what true friends he had among the fellows who were left, though most of them were gone. He walked about the familiar rooms, looking at the new pictures, photographs of his friends in uniform. This one was a lieutenant in officers' training camp. That one had gone with the ambulance corps. Tom was with the engineers, and Jimmie and Sam had joined the tank service. Two of the fellows were in France in the front ranks, another had enlisted in the marines, it seemed that hardly any were left, and of those three had been turned down for some slight physical defect, and were working in munition factories and the ship yard. Everything was changed. The old playmates had become men with earnest purposes. He did not stay long. There was a restlessness about it all that pulled the strings of his heart, and made him realize how different everything was.

(To Be Continued Next Week)

Rebouncing History.

From Life.

If we ever have Ford for president, it will be the second time a rough rider has held down the job.

5¢

Had Your Iron Today?



Delicious Hot-Day Lunch

BEST lunch is two packages of Little Sun-Maid Raisins and a glass of milk.

Tastes good when you're hungry. Nourishes yet keeps you cool.

Raisin's 75 per cent fruit sugar is in practically predigested form, furnishing 1560 calories of energizing nutriment per pound.

Doesn't tax digestion so doesn't heat the blood, yet energizes almost immediately.

Big men eat little lunches to conserve their thinking power. Don't overeat and lag behind the leaders. Get two packages of Little Sun-Maids now.

Little Sun-Maids Between-Meal Raisins

5c Everywhere

—in Little Red Packages

Brief and Effective.

In early days of Vermont, when marriages were solemnized without getting a license, one bitter midnight, 20 degrees below zero, a couple called the squire to the window. Shivering, in his nightshirt, he asked: "What in h— do you want?" "We want to be married." "Be married and be d—d," and he slammed the window down.

This is probably the shortest wedding ceremony that coupled legal accuracy with the religious prayer.—From *Off the Record*.

Dish washing being hateful, why sn't it done by itinerants, like lawn mowing?

Affection before marriage is often overdone, but after marriage it is often rare.

Oratory.

"You have never tried to shine as a great orator?" "No," replied Senator Sorghum. "My idea of a great orator is a man who has a vast audience unanimously with him at the meeting and then loses every one who goes home and remembers enough of the speech to think it over."

YOU CAN WALK IN COMFORT

If you shake into your shoes some ALLEN'S FOOT-EASE, the Antiseptic, Healing powder for shoes that pinch or feet that ache. It takes the friction from the shoe and gives relief to corns and bunions, hot, tired, sweating, swollen feet. Ladies can wear shoes one size smaller by shaking Allen's Foot-Ease in each shoe.—Advertisement.

Signal for Anvil Chorus.

"Pride goeth before a fall." "True. Which of the neighbors are you going to knock now?"

What Is It Worth to Change a Tire?



On the road changing a tire is not an especially pleasant task.

The dust or mud, the grease and grime, the tedious delay—all are things we like to avoid.

But the time to think about these things is when you buy the tire—not after the blow-out occurs.

For some tires blow out much more easily than others. Outward appearance counts for little.

It is the material in the tire and the construction of it that determines its strength.

Goodyear recognizes these facts and all Goodyear Tires are made of long staple cotton.

Take the 30 x 3 1/2 Cross Rib Clincher Tire here illustrated, for example.

It is made of Arizona cotton, the fibres of which average 1 1/2 inches long.

Many 30 x 3 1/2 clincher tires are made of short staple cotton from 1/2 inch to 1 1/8 inches long.

This means less strength and greater danger of blow-outs—more tire troubles.

Yet this high grade guaranteed Goodyear Tire costs only \$10.95.

You can buy some tires for even less than this but none with the fine materials and construction of this one.

Can you afford to take a chance on more frequent tire troubles for the sake of the slightly lower price of cheaper tires?

GOODYEAR

10c Saves Need Buying a New Skirt
Putnam Fadeless Dyes—dyes or tints as you wish