

# ONE OF OURS

By WILLA CATHER.  
Famous Nebraska Author.

(Continued from Yesterday.)

**SYNOPSIS.**  
Claude Wheeler, son of a Nebraska rancher, is disappointed in his life with Edna Moore, religiously cold daughter of James Moore, Frankfort, Neb. miller. After living together a year and a half she goes to China to visit her younger sister, Caroline, a business woman. He had three years in a small denominational college in Lincoln, where he became a friend of the Erlich family, notably Ernest Havel and Leonard Dawson, young farmers and neighbors of the Wheeler family. He has an elder brother, Willy, in business in Frankfort, his father, Nat, and a younger brother, Ralph. While home on leave from camp he falls in love with Gladys Turner, high school friend of his wife. Claude goes to France with his company. He and Lieutenant Gerhardt become friends. Gerhardt's first active service is leading a successful attack on a German machine gun nest, in which Claude is wounded in the ankle by an exploding shell. Gerhardt gave up a musical career to enter the army. Within 10 days' leave they visit Madame and Mike, Claude's French friends. Gerhardt's wife he was studying violin in France several years before. At the expiration of their leave they rejoin their battalion and go to the front. Captain Muxey fell on one knee, blushed furiously and sprang up, only to fall again, ashy white, with the leg of his trousers going red.

"There it is, to the left!" Hicks shouted, pointing. They saw now. From a closed house, some distance down a street off the square, smoke was coming. It hung before one of the upstairs windows. The Captain's orderly dragged him into a wineshop. Claude and David, followed by the men, ran down the street and broke in the door. The two officers went through the rooms on the first floor, while Hicks and his lot made straight for an enclosed stairway at the back of the house. As they reached the foot of the stairs, they were met by a volley of rifle shots, and two of the men tumbled over. Four Germans were stationed at the head of the steps.

The Americans scarcely knew whether their bullets or their bayonets got to the Hun first; they were not conscious of going up, till they were there. When Claude and David reached the landing, the squad were wiping their bayonets, and four grey bodies were piled in the corner. Bert Fuller and Dell Able ran down the narrow hallway and threw open the door into the room on the street. Two shots, and Dell came back with his jaw shattered and the blood spouting from the left side of his neck. Gerhardt caught him, and tried to close the artery with his fingers. "How many are in there, Bert?" Claude called.

"I couldn't see. Look out, sir! You can't get through that door more than two at a time!"

The door still stood open, at the end of the corridor. Claude went down the steps until he could sight along the floor of the passage, into the front room. The shutters were closed in there, and the sunlight came through the slats. In the middle of the floor, between the door and the windows, stood a tall chest of drawers, with a mirror attached to the top. In the narrow space between the bottom of this piece of furniture and the floor, he could see a pair of boots. It was possible there was but one man in the room, shooting from behind his movable fort,—though there

might be others hidden in the corners. "There's only one fellow in there, I guess. He's shooting from behind a big dresser in the middle of the room. Come on, one of you, we'll have to go in and get him."

Willy Katz, the Austrian boy from the Omaha packing house, stepped up and stood beside him. "Now, Willy, we'll both go in at once; you jump to the right, and I to the left,—and one of us will jab him. He can't shoot both ways at once. Are you ready? All right—Now!"

Claude thought he was taking the more dangerous position himself, but the German probably reasoned that the important man would be on the right. As the two Americans dashed through the door, he fired. Claude caught him in the back with his bayonet, under the shoulder blade, but Willy Katz had got a bullet in his brain, through one of his blue eyes. He fell and never stirred. The German officer fired his revolver again as he went down, shouting in English, English with no foreign accent.

"You swine, go back to Chicago!" Then he began choking with blood. Sergeant Hicks ran in and shot the dying man through the temples. Nobody stopped him.

The officer was a tall man, covered with medals and orders; must have been very handsome. His linen and his hands were as white as if he were going to a ball. On the dresser were the files and paste and buffers with which he had kept his nails so pink and smooth. A ring with a ruby, beautifully cut, was on his little fin-

ger. Bert Fuller screwed it off and offered it to Claude. He shook his head. That English sentence had unnerved him. Bert held the ring out to Hicks, but the Sergeant threw down his revolver and broke out: "Think I'd touch anything of his? That beautiful little girl, and my buddy— He's worse than dead, Dell is worse!" He turned his back on his comrades so that they wouldn't see him cry.

"Can I keep it myself, sir?" Bert asked.

Claude nodded. David had come in, and was opening the shutters. This officer, Claude was thinking, was a very different sort of being from the poor prisoners they had been scooping up like tadpoles from the cellars. One of the men picked up a gorgeous silk dressing gown from the bed, another pointed to a dressing-case full of hammered silver. Gerhardt said it was Russian silver; this man must have come from the Eastern front. Bert Fuller and Nifty Jones were going through the officer's pockets. Claude watched them, and thought they did about right. They didn't touch his medals; but his gold cigarette case, and the platinum watch still ticking on his wrist,—he wouldn't have further need for them. Around his neck, hung by a delicate chain, was a miniature case, and in it was a painting,—not, as Bert romantically hoped when he opened it, of a beautiful woman, but of a young man, pale as snow, with blurred forget-me-not eyes.

Claude studied it, wondering. "It looks like a poet, or something. Probably a kid brother, killed at the beginning of the war. Gerhardt took it and glanced at it with a disdainful expression. "Probably. There, let him keep it, Bert." He touched Claude on the shoulder to call his attention to the inlay work on the handle of the officer's revolver.

Claude noticed that David looked at him as if he were very much pleased with him,—looked, indeed, as

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The fact that you don't know whether or not it is proper to let the boy who takes you home kiss you, makes me not eyes. Claude studied it, wondering. "It looks like a poet, or something. Probably a kid brother, killed at the beginning of the war. Gerhardt took it and glanced at it with a disdainful expression. "Probably. There, let him keep it, Bert." He touched Claude on the shoulder to call his attention to the inlay work on the handle of the officer's revolver.

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