

**A Souvenir
From the Dead**

By EDWARD BUCKMAN

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I am one of the old maids who became such by the civil war. An old woman with no hair on my head save what is white as snow. I have passed half a century alone, yet not alone, for once I have seen him.

He was killed in one of the battles around Richmond during McClellan's advance upon that city. A year before he had marched away with the soldier boys of '61—how young they seem to have been now and how strange that those who live are becoming tottering old men and that the boys' mothers and the girls who loved them could send them out to die—he had gone down into Virginia, carrying my heart with him. He had fallen and been thrown into a trench, and then for the first time I wondered that I could have consented to his going.

No one has ever taken his place. I have lived as though we were one, he in the heavenly, I in the earthly sphere. For many years I wished to go down to Virginia and visit the spot where he died, and yet I dreaded to do so. It was not till the beginning of this century that I could make up my mind to do so.

I went to Richmond and visited the residence of the president of the Confederacy, which is now a museum. There I saw the arms and uniforms of Confederate heroes. But what took me nearer to the conflict of years before was a southern lady who told me how when a girl she had listened to the distant booming, gaining hope when it receded and losing courage when it drew nearer. From there I went to the battlefield.

I went alone. The battle in which he was taken from me is called Seven Pines. Why it is called Seven Pines I know not. There are thousands of pines there now, but I believe they have all grown up since the battle. It was fought in a cornfield. But it has not been tilled since that day in 1862, and the trees have had ample time to grow.

I found a long line of low earthworks that was thrown up by McClellan's army, behind which to resist the Confederates hurried against it by General Lee. Forty years had passed over those works, during which the pines had grown up as if to shield the dead and the trenches beneath them, in which so many soldiers' bodies were thrown. Walking on the line of earthworks, every now and again I came to a redoubt, where stood cannon, and there beneath were the ruts made by the gun carriages.

Before going on to the field I had been told that I should have a guide. I declined to take one or to go with a party who were conducted by one. I went alone. It was late in the afternoon, and most of the visitors were coming away. It seemed to me a sacrifice to listen to the story from a human voice told so eloquently by those intrenchments, the rises here and there in the ground over the dead, the waving pines, which with every breeze sighed a requiem. And I wished to be where my boy lover had fallen, without any one to jar upon me.

So I lingered till every one else had gone, sitting alone on the rampart, looking out upon the trees that obstructed further view. They were not there on that terrible day of '62. As I looked they seemed to dissolve and their place to be taken by waving grain. I saw a long brown line advancing, heard the word of command among them and the louder word of those preparing to resist them.

Whether a change that came over me was in the day or in the night, whether it was in me or in my surroundings, whether I saw what I seemed to see or it was a half-conscious dream, I know not. But I was back in '62, and it seemed as if the wrath of heaven had come upon the earth.

The thunder ceased. The light was from scattered campfires. The sounds were the chatting of burial parties and the falling clouds, with occasional volleys fired over the dead.

Suddenly I felt a touch on my shoulder. I looked up, and there was my soldier lover. Could this be he whom I had looked upon as a man? Why, he was but a boy—not a sign of a beard on his face. It was round and full, while in my head were many gray hairs and my face was wrinkled. One moment he stood looking down at me. I reached out for his hand, but before I could clasp it he had faded away.

When I came to myself the morning sun was shining down through the pines. I was lying on my back on the rampart, looking up at a patch of sky between the branches. It was blue and beautiful, with scattered white clouds sailing peacefully over it.

I was filled with consternation at having passed a night out on that battlefield of forty years ago. I raised myself with difficulty. My eye caught something mingling with the earth. It was a worn silver ten cent piece. I took it up, rubbed the dirt from it and on it traced with difficulty three letters—M. E. L.

I had forgotten that the night before he marched I had given him a new ten cent piece on which he had scratched my initials.

Is it anything to me whether or no my story is believed, whether I dreamed, whether where so many souvenirs of soldiers have been picked up it is to be wondered that I should have found one with my initials on it? In my own mind there is no doubt.

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