THE FROZEN ROSE

By M. J. PHILLIPS

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Marcia Gordon was sixteen years old when the Spanish American war broke out, and a more ardent little patriot did not live in Huntersville. It was natural that she should love her country. Her father and grandfather had fought for the Union in the civil war, and on the bright April morning in 1898, when the Huntersville rifles marched away to join the balance of the regiment at the state rendezvous, her brother, scarce three years her senior, was in its ranks. Furthermore Boyd McCarron also wore the blue and as first duty sergeant stepped off blithely at the head of the sturdy column of fours.

McCarron and Marcia had been friends and comrades all their lives. Their mutual liking was trembling on the verge of something deeper and more enduring when the declaration of war swept the young man away to the camp where the state troops were fitted for the coming campaign.

McCarron, who had been clerk in Brown's clothing store, was a fine manly young fellow and a natural soldier. He liked the pomp and circumstance of war, the drilling, the music, the thrilling pause at "retreat," when every head was bared in reverence while the colors were slowly lowered and the band swung into "The Star Spangled Banner." He liked the stirring notes of "reveille" and the monotonous patter of "taps" [illegible] much one thinks of home and of [illegible] prayers. He believed that [illegible] this brave guy a bit of [illegible] it. The thought of Marcia [illegible] a thrill of the pride. The [illegible] who he sometimes [illegible] were [illegible] built for [illegible] of the soldier [illegible] after the war."

But McCarron [illegible] see Cuba. [illegible] rendezvous two months, [illegible] ping and drilling [illegible] seemed. The day the regiment was [illegible] orders as soldiers of the United States "to serve for two years unless sooner discharged," he received a telegram announcing that his father, a [illegible] conductor, had been killed by a [illegible].

The hour which followed was [illegible] with keenest agony. [illegible]

SAW HIS HERO THE LITTLE FIGURE CLEAR OF THE RAILS.

ther's death was mingled with sorrow scarcely less poignant that he must give up his place in the ranks.

His mother and himself were now absolutely alone in the world. Her health was not strong. Their little home was mortgaged. Inclination pointed one way, duty the other, and duty won. At the very hour the Huntersville rifles took the oath McCarron, though with them in spirit, stepped from the train at his home city a civilian.

A few persons understood and admired him for the course, so eloquent of moral courage, which he had adopted. Their approbation did not counterbalance the sneers of many who regarded the young man as a coward. Brown, proprietor of the store, was a sensible man. Hysteria did not pass as patriotism with him. Despite the clamoring of those who insisted that McCarron for running away from the enemy's bullets should be driven from town he gave the boy his old place.

The cloud in time passed. Saner judgment convinced most persons they were wrong in branding McCarron as a poltroon. When the company, sadly decimated, returned from Cuba after the war the soldiers had nothing but good words for the man who had been their comrade. Gradually he won back his old place in the affection and esteem of his townsmen. He had with al two comforting reflections—his mother [illegible] with a gratitude that was pitiful the depth of his sacrifice and the mortgage had been lifted from their home.

Marcia Gordon found in her erstwhile playmate a puzzle which time did not solve. The high spirited girl abhorred cowardice and could not believe that the boy who had been her companion could be base. Over and over again she convinced herself that he was straightforward, brave and manly; that he had come home because his conscience had shown him it was the only thing to do. And, while she hated herself for it, a doubt always crept into her reasoning, a doubt she could not dispel.

The love for McCarron which had been on the verge of disclosing itself to her maiden soul was arrested by the persistent distrust. It was like a rosebud—frozen as it was about to unfold in glorious bloom and fragrance. It did not decay, and it could not develop. The icy grip checked one as it prevented the other. The girl had admirers in plenty, for she was light hearted and good to look upon. Yet none made any impression, for the steadfast heart could love but once the stern hold but a single rose.

She knew that McCarron's love was hers, hers alone, and that with him too, there never would be any one else. They met frequently as friends, but ever in his eyes was the dumb, unconscious hope she dared not encourage, in her eyes the query he could not answer.

She sat by the window of her home one afternoon in early winter watching the first snowfall of the season. Little drifts were forming here and there on the dusty pavement. The boys of the neighborhood, radiant with health and animal spirits, welcomed the snow with wild rejoicing.

They were dancing in a circle on the tracks of the electric line. Her heart gave a little throb as McCarron appeared, striding along homeward. He seemed to enjoy breasting the wind. His head was up and his broad shoulders back.

A smile on his fine face, he stopped a moment to watch the boys at their play. The early darkness of winter was ready beginning to thicken, and the shouts of joyous young America prevented sight or sound of a heavy car until it was almost upon the merry circle.

Then the boys fled in panic, all but one little lad, who slipped on the smooth wet bricks and sprawled helpless across the rail. The motorman banged the gong and twisted the brake frantically, but the momentum of the car still carried it forward at crue speed.

With a sudden sick horror and yet with a thrill of joy, too, Marcia, straining her eyes through the gloom, saw McCarron dart from the walk into the street, saw him brush the little figure clear of the rails and then go down himself beneath the rush of the car.

She must have fainted in her chair for the next she remembered the room was full of men and McCarron, dusty bruised and senseless, lay on the couch beside her. Old Dr. Giddings in tones of professional cheerfulness was speaking to her father. "Unconscious just now, of course, but he's not dangerously hurt. A broken leg is the worst of his injuries. I never saw a nobler act and I'm more than happy it isn't going to cost him his life."

The frozen rose of love in Marcia's heart had burst its icy bonds of doubt at McCarron's brave deed and bloomed in splendor on the instant. She dropped on her knees by the couch and kissed McCarron's blood stained lips.

Quickened into life by the caress, his eyelids fluttered, opened. He fixed a glance of wonder, then comprehension on the girl. "This has given me your pity, Maury, at last," he whispered.

The feeble tones expressing so much of contentment and affection and the old dear name of childhood caused the ready tears to overflow. "Not pity, Boyd," she answered, "not pity, dear heart, but love!"

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MANILA, March 19.—Eva Rowland, known on the Pacific Coast as "Little Egypt," who was reported to have eloped from San Francisco with H. McKinley, who figured in the Oregon land fraud cases, has arrived here. Miss Rowland says that she and McKinley separated at Shanghai and that McKinley is now en route to Guatemala under the name of A. Osler.

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Mar. 30, 1905.

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