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# The Advocate

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## "AN' HE WAS MY FATHER, TOO"

By Leonard Massenburg

When Frank Allen's mother received a telegram telling her that he had graduated with honors from a Northern College, she fell on her knees and gave thanks to God. The little woman had struggled against great odds to accomplish this great feat.

The boy's father deserted his mother three years after he was born, but the will power of the little mother kept her from giving up. She had labored night and day in rich folks' kitchens in order that her son would amount to something.

For years, the whereabouts of his father, his mother had not known and she did not try to find out. She lived for her son only.

Frank's mother and his sweetheart, Laura, were on hand to greet him when he arrived home from college. A reception followed in their little home surrounded by many admiring friends. Frank's good looks plus the comely Laura, made a very pleasing couple to the eye.

War clouds began to appear on the horizon, he noted when he scanned the morning paper some time later. What did it mean to young Allen? He had nothing to fight for. But his mind began to be disturbed. His grandfather fought on the Union side, and he had had three uncles in the Spanish-American War.

"Fighting seems to run in my family, and I am no exception to the rule," he said to himself, as he laid aside the paper and began to wonder what part he could play in such a war.

After war had been declared and the announcement of an officers' training school appeared in the papers, Frank's mind was made up, but his mother had not been consulted, and he wondered just how she would take it.

At the dinner table, Frank told his mother of his desire to go to the officers' training school.

"Son, are you going to war and leave me alone? Think of the years I have labored for you. Is this my reward? Suppose you are killed, what would I do?"

Her words came thick and fast. The expression on her face was a silent witness to that fact.

Frank looked at his mother for a moment and then spoke.

"Remember that God has answered your prayers this far and He will continue to do so," he assured her.

"What did Laura say about your going to war?" he was then asked.

"She had the same idea that you have, but when I assured her that it would be a moment of much rejoicing when she could walk to the altar with a hero, she changed her mind," he replied.

"I will give you my answer at the breakfast table," the little mother concluded.

During the night, Frank's mother consulted her God. She was prepared the next morning, to give her answer.

"For some unknown reason I seem to have no fear of your going to war and believe that you will return to me safe and sound. You have my consent," she told him.

Two weeks later Frank had passed



A STORY OF THE GREAT WAR

Darkness was falling over the battle-scarred field as Captain Allen made the final dash with his wounded sergeant. He landed in the trench nearly exhausted.

all the necessary examinations and was awaiting his call.

By working and studying hard, young Allen was commissioned as a captain. Again he was the recipient of admiration from a host of friends. He gave the credit to his mother.

Following a few days at home, Frank was ordered to report to a Northern camp for duty.

Arriving in camp, Frank was assigned to an infantry company. In the meantime, among several men sent from the regular army to the newly created infantry companies, was Sergeant John Thomas, a veteran of many years. He was assigned to Captain Allen's company.

From their first meeting it seemed that the two men for some unknown reason, began to have much in common between them. They became much interested in each other. Yet there was an air of mystery in Sergeant Thomas that Captain Allen did not understand. So much so, that, whenever the captain's mother would visit him, Sergeant Thomas was always on leave.

Finally the day arrived when Captain Allen's regiment was ordered over seas. After many days of dodging the enemy's submarines they landed in a French port, immediately going to their training place.

After two months of instruction, they were ordered to a front-line trench. A veteran of many years of service, Sergeant Thomas gave his captain much valuable information.

Although she had not met Sergeant Thomas, Frank's mother would ask to be remembered to him in all of her letters.

Having driven the enemy from his stonewall position and the company being now prepared for a counter-attack, Captain Allen sent for his sergeant.

"You sent for me, Captain?" the sergeant asked after saluting his commander outside of the latter's dugout.

"Yes, sergeant," replied the cap-

**The boyish company commander never knew why his top-sergeant got in front of him on raids within the enemy lines until the end of the war, and then—**

tain. "Come in my dugout, I want to talk to you."

"Sergeant, what was the idea of trying to lead the outfit last night?" the captain began. "Remember my men are to follow, not lead, me."

"It is not that, captain," the sergeant answered.

"Well, what is it then?" shot back the captain.

"Men like you are too valuable to die," replied the sergeant.

"I do not agree with you, sergeant. No man is too good to die for his country."

"You are, I am sure," returned the sergeant.

Captain Allen was startled for a moment, but he let that particular subject drift.

"By the way, sergeant, I received a letter from mother this morning. She sent her regards to you."

But the captain did not notice the look on the sergeant's face when he spoke of his mother.

Several minutes later a corporal rushed into the dugout. "The Huns are staging a counter-attack," he yelled, and then dashed out again.

Sergeant Thomas started out. "Just a moment, sergeant," the captain said calmly. "Remember, every man for himself and God for us all."

Sergeant Thomas formed the company and reported to his commander. All in readiness, they awaited the word to go forward.

"Remember what I told you in my dugout," Captain Allen reminded his sergeant. Hearing no reply, he noticed a queer look on the sergeant's face.

"What's the matter, sergeant? I never saw such a look on a man's face," the captain inquired.

"I feel just like I look sir," the sergeant replied.

"Thinking of being knocked off?" he was asked.

The sergeant nodded.

"Nonsense," replied the captain.

"Let's go!" shouted the sergeant when he saw the captain's hand wave forward.

Shells began to burst near by. Men began to fall. The line wavered, but it re-formed and rushed on. The wounded were forgotten as the men pushed forward. A clash of steel followed. The enemy gave way everywhere. But something happened.

"Look, captain!" shouted a private. "There's Sergeant Thomas wounded out there."

"My God! he is too good a man to die out there," the captain exclaimed. A moment later Captain Allen was among the death-dealing shells in No Man's Land.

Several minutes later he reached his fallen subordinate. With the latter on his back, he began an almost impossible effort to return to his lines. The shrieking shells fell like

rain. Machine gun bullets raked the ground. But on he came, slow and sure.

Back home at that very same moment Captain Allen's mother and his sweetheart, Laura, were reading one of his letters. They wondered how he was faring.

"Don't fail me, God. I am trusting in you to bring him back to me safe and sound," the little mother prayed as she looked heavenward. Laura kissed his picture in silence.

"I am praying for you. Are you thinking of me?" she said softly.

Darkness was falling over the battle-scarred field as Captain Allen made the final dash with his wounded sergeant. He landed in the trench nearly exhausted.

Opening his eyes as if from a long sleep, the sergeant recognized his company commander. But it could be seen that his life was ebbing. Raising his shell-torn body with the aid of his captain, he pulled from his bloody shirt a neatly wrapped package and gave it to the officer.

"Give this to your mother in person," he whispered.

"But—the Huns may get me," the captain reminded him.

"Don't worry, you will get back safe," were the wounded sergeant's last words.

His eyes closed in death.

Sergeant Thomas's body was buried in the soil of France that he fought for. Even the enemy's big shells fell that day, un-noticed by Captain Allen, who was the last to leave the grave.

The package was carefully re-wrapped and was carried throughout the war.

Then came the armistice, and the long wait for the voyage home.

A great welcome awaited the captain on his return to the little home in the South. A reception followed, in which he spoke feelingly of the decoration he received for rescuing his wounded sergeant. The announcement of his engagement to Laura was an added feature of much rejoicing.

The last guest departed, and he accompanied Laura to her home, lingering outside for the last kiss. Then he came back to his mother, and drew out of his pocket, the package his sergeant had given him.

His mother carefully unwrapped the package and her eyes centered on a letter. It read:

Dear Martha:  
I hope you will forgive me for the suffering I have caused you all these years. After learning that our son was my captain, it was too much for me to face you. That was why I was always on leave when you came to see him.

I joined the army soon after I deserted you. But I hope what I left for you will partly redeem me in your eyes. Break the news gently to our son, and tell him that was why I took so much interest in him.

Accept my congratulations on the way you have brought him up. He is a gentleman.

Good bye and God bless you.

Your husband,  
JOHN ALLEN.

"My God!" the mother cried as she gave the letter her son.

"And he was my father, too," Captain Allen exclaimed.

The little mother only nodded her head.

## ARE PETTY AILMENTS ROBBING YOU OF HAPPINESS?

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