

**The Dead Soldier's Afterglow**

By HELVIN BRAYTON

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National guard were fighting a battle. The red were attacking the blue's country, while the blue were defending it. Lieutenant Ned Wagstaff was standing behind the line of battle, the men, at parade rest, waiting orders. A staff officer rode up and said:

"This command has been annihilated."

The colonel turned to his men and said to them that, having been annihilated, they could fight no more. Then he gave the order to stack arms and permit the men to do as they liked till retreat. "Well," said Wagstaff to Captain Drummond, "I want you to do something for me."

"What is it?"

"I want you to go up to the house and tell Belle that my regiment has been annihilated, that I've been killed and that she's up all around."

"I want to see how she'll take it. It is certainly not so silly as it sounds."

"All right," said Wagstaff, "I'll try it on. Suppose she says she's pretty stupid."

"I never thought of that. Perhaps I'd better be dead on the battlefield."

"I'll never bring her to see the corpse. First I want to know if you're going to give me away."

"I won't do that, though it would be a good joke to do so. I'll play the part for you as well as I can."

"And you'll tell me how she takes it?"

"Yes, but if she wants to see your corpse you can judge for yourself about that."

"All right. You'll find me under that oak over there. So long."

Billy departed for the house, and Wagstaff went over to the oak, sprawled himself on the grass and, to kill time while waiting to be inspected for a dead man, lit a cigar. Men who have sham battles need to get up a bit of Dutch courage. Ned had distinguished himself for bravery induced by several braces during the fight; consequently he felt doped and soon yielded to slumber. Suddenly he was awakened by a girl's voice:

"Where is he? Oh, tell me, where is he?"

Ned, recognizing the voice of the girl he loved and realizing that soldiers are not usually killed with cigars in their mouths, lit the half smoked weed.

He felt it roll down his cheek, but where it landed he couldn't see. He lay stiff and stark.

"Where he is?" he heard Drummond say.

Ned looked sideway between his fingers and saw Belle Harkaway hurrying toward him. He closed his eyes and lay with a peaceful expression on his face. Indeed, he put on a certain quality which he had often practiced before a mirror and which he considered very becoming to him. Belle stood beside him. He dared not open his eyes, but he knew she was there very near him.

"Oh, Ned!" she moaned.

"He died a noble death," Billy put in solemnly.

"Dear, brave Ned! If I had only not loved you as I did. If you could but speak one word to me to tell me that you forgive me. Are you sure he is dead? There's color in his face."

"Oh, that's often the case with men in battle. They call it the soldier's afterglow."

"That was very clever of Billy, seeing that the afterglow was produced by the braces Ned had taken during the fight."

"Ned," moaned Belle, "speak to me. I didn't dare part his lips sufficiently to look at her, but he could not be looking at her."

"He makes a beautiful corpse," Billy remarked.

"Lovely! He must have been smoking when he was shot."

"What makes you think that?" asked Billy.

"Don't you see the cigar on his lip?"

"That was just like him," said Billy. "He was always doing that kind of thing. He cared nothing for danger."

"What were his last words?" asked Belle. "Did he say anything about me?"

"Yes, he said, 'Tell Belle Harkaway that my last thoughts, my last words, are of her.'"

"Oh, dear! If I could have been here to hold him in my arms when he died! Somehow I can't realize that the red for you call the soldier's afterglow the blood of life. I'm going to pinch his cheek. It may bring him back to us."

"She gave his cheek a terrific pinch and winced, but stood the test."

"See!" cried Belle. "The afterglow is it?"

"She pinched him again, this time so roughly that he howled."

Opening his eyes, he looked into two of the merriest orbs that ever gazed at the corpse of a beloved object.

"Hats!" he said. "There's no use trying to be dead under a pinch like that."

"More afterglow!" she cried, clapping her hands with delight as a blush became covered his face.

**His Secret**

By NATHAN HARDY

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When I was at the university the set of students to which I belonged contained Oscar Poland at least Poland was at one time a member of our group—but as time wore on he was gradually dropped by all except Alan Wells and myself. This was on account of the principles, or lack of principles, he advocated. For instance, he asserted that the Spartan code—that the criminality attached to stealing was in most cases today. He declared that he would rob any one if he could do so without being detected.

When Poland gave us such ideas as this at first we laughed at him, telling him that he didn't believe what he said. But pessimists are never popular, and one by one his friends dropped away from him. As I have said, Wells and I stuck to him, feeling all the while that his pessimism was but skin deep. The only way we could see he proved his theory of general selfishness was by declining to spend his money as we spent ours. When we asked him what he did with his surplus change he said that he was keeping it for his own use. "You fellows," he would say, "don't spend money on each other because you wish to, but because you are afraid of being considered mean if you don't. Ergo, you are mean. Nevertheless I will admit that there may be some generosity in your case, for you do not spend your money, while I, who do not spend mine, show myself to be absolutely mean and selfish."

This would start anew arguments that had already been worn threadbare, and at the end of every argument Poland would lose another friend.

"What do you think of a man," said one of our set to me one day, "who admits that he would rob or steal provided he was sure of not being caught?"

"In the case of a common thief who practiced what he preached," I replied, "I would think him an element of society that should be so far as possible eliminated. In the case of Oscar Poland I should consider that I did not understand him."

"Not understand him? Well, I like that. The more fool you if you should leave funds within his grasp that he could take without being detected. I tell you the man who devotes such ideas shows that he has been born blind to principle the same as another has been born blind to colors. Take my word for it, if Oscar Poland ever finds an opportunity to make himself rich at another's expense he'll do it."

"They say business is but legalized robbery."

"My opinion of you is that you're fractured with these fallacies yourself."

And so it was that some of our associates came to show some coolness to Wells and me, who defended Poland. Alan and I were talking the matter over one day, and Alan remarked that he wondered what Oscar did with his money. There was certainly no evidence of his hoarding it, and, as to spending it, he was considered too mean to offer a friend a cigar. That same evening we were walking along one of the principal streets of the town when suddenly Poland appeared ahead of us.

"Let's shadow him," said Alan. "We may find out something."

"If I thought for a moment we should discover something that would compromise him I would decline. As it is I'm with you."

So we lagged behind just far enough to keep Oscar in sight, now and again dodging behind a pair of steps or a tree to keep him from observing us. Presently we saw him go into a dry goods store. When he left the store he carried a bundle under his arm. He kept on in his course, we following. His next stop was at a drug store.

"Going to buy nuxetida and take a dose now and then when no one sees him," Alan remarked.

One more stop and we had seen all of our quarry's purchases. He entered a toy store.

"I have it," exclaimed Alan. "He's married and running a family without the faculty knowing it."

"Perhaps you're right," I replied. "The chase is getting interesting."

Oscar left the toy store with more bundles and, turning off the main shopping street, pursued one that led into a mean portion of the town.

"I hope," said Alan, "he isn't bringing up his children in this location."

Presently Oscar stopped at the door of a little cottage that was rotting away. It was opened for him, and he went inside.

"Our game's blocked," I said.

"Wait till he goes away."

So we waited half an hour, when Oscar left the house and strolled unconcernedly down the street. He had no sooner gone beyond recall than we knocked at the door from which he had emerged. A pale woman opened it.

"We're looking for Oscar Poland," said Alan, entering without an invitation.

"Well, it was all out. Several little children one of them ill were there. Another was trying on some new clothing, and by the sick one on a table stood a bottle of medicine."

We stayed long enough to discover that this was one of several poor families Oscar was caring for, then went away, shamed into a small gift of our own.

But we never told him or any one else we had his secret.

**A DOCTOR'S REVENGE**

By ALBERT CHITTENDEN

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When I was a young doctor just graduated I found making a living a very difficult job. I wished to start in by doing hospital work. There was an excellent hospital in a suburban town where I knew some people, and I was advised to take the examination for the position of house surgeon, which was vacant. I did so and failed. The question that turned the scale against me was this:

"When you have done everything in your power for a patient, what is the next step?"

Having a vein of satirical humor in me, I answered the question in this wise:

"Get rid of him by sending him on a trip."

I saw by the grim looks of the examiners that I had lost. The man who got the position answered the question in this wise:

"Try something new even if it has no apparent connection with the patient's ailment. To cease your efforts indicates to him that you have abandoned him. To continue them gives him the benefit of hope. Besides, we must never give up a patient till he is dead."

While I was struggling for a practice I one day received a hurry call to see a child who had got a coin in his windpipe. He was but four years old and, having been given the coin, was so delighted that he had put it in his mouth and started across the street to buy candy with it. Forgetting it, he breathed it in.

When I reached the patient I found two or three doctors. I had been called several hours before, but when the message came was not in my office. The oldest and foremost doctor of those present was Dr. Gibbs, who ten years before had floored me on examination by asking me what should be done when everything had been done. He didn't remember me, and I was glad he didn't, for I dreaded to meet him.

I found these doctors in the very position indicated by that question. They had done everything that could be done, but they hadn't removed the coin from the child's throat. Dr. Gibbs appeared to be the most dependent of the lot. Assuming a fierce tone, I said:

"What are you gentlemen doing here, standing about and holding your hands? Are you going to let the child die of strangulation?"

My remarks were made to all the doctors present, but as I spoke I looked daggers at Dr. Gibbs.

"We've tried everything," he said.

"Well, sir, what's the next thing to do when you've tried everything?"

"Perhaps you can tell us," he retorted tartly.

"Yes, sir; I can. When a doctor has tried everything and all things have failed it is his duty to try something else, no matter how remote it may seem from the patient's ailment."

"Well," asked Dr. Gibbs, "what do you suggest?"

"Desperate cases need desperate remedies."

I made three steps toward the child, took him up, laid him across my knee with his head down and began to spank him unmercifully. He yelled, and before I had given him twenty blows out came an old-fashioned copper cent. It fell on the floor, rolled in a circle and turned on its side.

I was never so astonished in my life. I had had no idea of getting rid of the obstruction. I had only wished to beat at his own game the man who had kept me out of a position which might have enabled me to start a practice. But now that I had succeeded I resolved to push on further.

"There, gentlemen," I said, "you have an instance of the importance of never giving up a case. Perhaps success in this case was not to be expected from my expedient, but—"

"Success was to be expected," exclaimed one of the doctors. "It's a wonder that we who were here before you didn't think of it. The spanking induced in the child an emotion which called into play certain muscles, relaxing others. The head being inverted, the obstruction, which was loosened by this relaxation, was bound to come out."

Dr. Gibbs advanced toward me and put out his hand.

"I haven't the honor of your acquaintance, doctor," he said, "but I do not hesitate to say that you have in you that resource which eminently fits you for your profession. I shall write you for your device used in this case in the Tablet, to which I contribute, and if there is anything else I can do for you don't hesitate to call on me."

I didn't need to call on him. He and the other doctors who had been present published abroad my expedient, tried when the patient had been given up, and so simple that it was a wonder none of them had thought of it.

I am now an elderly man. I have often been solicited to take a place on some examining board, but have always resolutely declined. My faith in emulsion has been sapped by my own case. If I should ask a candidate what he should do with a child having a cent in his windpipe I should expect him to answer:

"Spank him."

This would never do. It would be little the profession, and the next child spanked might refuse to disgorge the obstruction.

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