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*The Private's Story*

A HARD campaign, full of wants and lacks and absences, brings a man speedily back to an appreciation of things long disregarded or forgotten. In camp somewhere in the woods between Siboney and Santiago I happened to think of ice cream soda. I hadn't drunk anything but beer and whiskey for fifty moons, but I got to dreaming of ice cream soda and I came near dying of longing for it. I couldn't get it out of my mind, try as I would to concentrate my thoughts upon the land crabs and mud with which I was surrounded. All I could do was to swear to myself that if I reached the United States again I would immediately make the nearest soda water fountain look like Spanish fours. I decided upon the flavor. In a loud, firm voice I would say: "Orange, please." What with the work and everything, I suppose some of us got to be a little childish.

But here is the funny part of it. In due time, I with many other heroes was loaded upon a Chinese junk. We knew, however, that it was a United States transport because it was commanded by a fool who was all bluster and bad manners and fear of Spaniards. In rough weather we made a sort of a pool of all the sound legs and arms, and by dint of hanging hard to each other, we lived until the old trap reached Fortress Monroe.

As we slowed down opposite the main battery—known to the department as Chamberlain's—we witnessed something which informed us that with all our wounds and fevers and starvations we hadn't felt it all. We were flying the yellow flag, but a launch came and circled swiftly about us. There was a little woman in the launch and she kept looking and looking and looking. Our ship was so high that she could see only those who hung at the rail, but she kept looking and looking and looking. Presently there was a commotion among some black doughboys who had seen her, and two of them ran aft to their colonel. The old man got up quickly and appeared at the rail, his arm in a sling. He cried: "Alice."

The little woman saw him, and instantly she covered her face with her hands as if blinded with a flash of white fire. She made no outcry; it was all in this simple, swift gesture, but we—we knew then. It told us. It told us the other part. And in a vision we all saw our own harbor lights. That is to say, those of us who had harbor lights.

My difficulty being of a minor description, I was one of the first ashore. A company of volunteers dug a way for us through a great crowd. The verandas of the two big hotels were thronged with women and officers in new uniforms. Everybody beheld us. It was very hard to face it out. Some of the boys had something which might be called stage fright. I knew we looked tough, but I didn't know how tough we looked until I saw all this splendid five-dollar-a-day crowd.

Some of the boys could walk, but naturally there were many who couldn't, and these last they loaded upon a big flatcar and towed it behind a trolley car. When that load passed the hotel, there was a noise made by a crowd which brought me up trembling. Perhaps it was a moan,

perhaps it was a sob—but, no, it was something far beyond either a moan or a sob. Anyhow, the sound of women weeping was in it, for I saw many of those fine ladies with wet cheeks when that gang of bandaged, dirty, ragged, emaciated, half starved cripples went by in review.

And let me tell you, it brought something to my eyes which I was ashamed to have seen, and my saber arm went stiff and strong as steel and I swore that, despite legislation and the appointment of incompetent quartermasters, I would live and die a good soldier, a true, straight, unkicking American regular soldier.

Now here is a funny thing. Avoiding the hospital people who were herding us, I entered a drug store and marched up to the soda water counter. The boy looked at me and I said: “Orange, please.”