

THE TOAST TO FORTY-FIVE¹

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IN this little Vermont town of Paris, on the top floor of the red-brick post-office block, over half a century have been located the quarters of Farrington Post, Paris Chapter, G. A. R.

In the rooms of Farrington Post — under a glass case filled with countless other relics belonging to Captain Jonathan Farrington's company, that marched away one hundred and seven strong that forenoon in '61 — has been kept a bottle of rare old wine.

That wine was old when those stalwart young Vermonters who followed Captain John Farrington were children. Through half a century it has occupied its place in that glass case; during that long time it has been viewed by many visitors to our town; over and over again has the story of "The Toast to Forty-five" been told until that double-quart of priceless vintage has become one of our chief sights of interest to the stranger within the gates. It was not through accident or chance that this bottle of wine was saved. Up to last August there was a pretty sentiment connected with that bottle of wine and why it should have been preserved thus throughout the years.

Up to last August, indeed! Because that bottle is no longer under the glass case in the Grand Army rooms in the post-office block. It has been taken from among those relics of yesterday; the seal has been broken; the contents have been poured out. Glistening red as the

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blood which those lads of '61 shed for the principles in which they believed, that liquor was consumed in the pledging of a toast.

When the homefolks suggested that the county give a dinner to the returned heroes on the sixteenth day of August, 1866—Bennington Battle Day and a holiday in Vermont always—Dashing Captain Jack Fuller was not the one to quash the suggestion. "Dashing Jack" had been the man to take John Farrington's place when John lost his life at Gettysburg. He was a great dude, was Captain Jack; a lover of the dramatic and the spectacular; with the pomp of soldiering verily in his blood and the vanity of many generations of Fullers in his fiber.

On the night of August 16, 1866, "The Toast to Forty-five Banquet" was held on the top floor of the old Vermont House. It took place in the big room with the spring dance-floor. That old Paris hostelry was burned in '73. In the course of that affair, Dashing Jack arose and made a speech—likewise a proposal.

The flower of Vermont of the Sixties was gathered about those tables. There were young men to whom fame and fortune afterward would come. There were sturdy beautiful girls in quaint dresses that in succeeding years would mother sons and daughters who are the pride and glory of Vermont of the present. The lights shone on gloriously happy faces. Two hundred voices turned the room into vocal pandemonium. It was several minutes before Dashing Captain Jack could gain their attention and make himself heard.

When finally all eyes were turned upon him, they saw that he was holding high in his right hand a bottle of wine.

"Ye gallant sons and daughters of Vermont! Tonight is a great night!" cried Jack in ringing, self-confident, magnetic tones. "We are attending a dinner tonight that will be remembered in the history of our town and State long after the last comrade now within sound of my voice has gone to make his bivouac with the illustrious Company Forty-five—the name which we have given the forty-five brave lads who marched away with

us but who were not destined by a higher providence to march back. On this night, therefore, beholding this wine before me, it has occurred to me to propose the inauguration of a rite — almost a sacred rite — the like of which no Post has ever heard.”

The room was now very quiet. And Captain Jack reveled in the drama of the scene.

“In this room,” he cried, “—in sound of my voice at this moment, are two boys who will be the very last to join Company Forty-five. Sooner or later we shall all be called to answer to our names in the Great Muster; but some will be called sooner than others. There will certainly come a day in the years which lie ahead when there will be only two remaining of this company of sixty-two here to-night. Think of it, boys! Just *two*! Look into one another’s faces and ask yourselves — who are those two — which of you will they be?”

The room was strangely silent. The smiles died on the faces of many women. Dashing Captain Jack indicated the wine he held in his hand.

“Here is the thing which I propose; to make the annual dinners of Farrington Post different from any other reunions which shall ever be held:

“I hold in my hand the last unsealed bottle of the vintage which we have tasted to-night in our first toast in peace to the missing lads that have made that peace possible. Let this last bottle be saved. Year after year we will have our annual dinners. Year after year, as we gather round the board, familiar faces will be missing. Many will fall by the way. At last — will be only two comrades — of this roomful here to-night. And when at last those two shall face one another and think back to this first banquet in the dim and sacred past — when they alone remain — when sixty have gone to join old Forty-five and they realize that perhaps before another year is passed, they will have joined that illustrious company also — let them break the seal on this bottle. Let them fill their glasses. Let them clink those crystal rims together and drink the last toast to those who have gone. And when the seal on this bottle thus is broken, let our reunions be held no more.”

They drank, and the next morning the banquet was a thing of history.

Year after year those veterans have gathered about the board and gazed on that rare old vintage, wondering whether he was to be one of the two to drink that final toast to Forty-five—and under what circumstances. Each has realized that before another August sixteenth came around, certain familiar faces were to be missing. Dashing Captain Jack started something far more dramatic than he realized.

Poor Captain Jack! He married one of the Kingsley girls that year and a little son was born to them. A month and a day after the birth of that son he was killed in an accident on the old New York Railroad. He was the first to join Forty-five!

Sixty-two men sat down to that first banquet. In 1900 the number was thirty—less than half. In 1910 there were eleven veterans. Since 1910 the old soldiers have been going rapidly.

At the Post dinner of August 16, 1912, the ranks of Captain Jack's company had dwindled to four old men. There was Uncle Joe Fodder, the commander; Martin Chisholm, who made his money in the grist-mill; Henry Weston, who for seven years had been an inmate of the State Soldier's Home; and—old Wilbur Nieson, who spent his days hanging around the street corners and stores.

The reunion ended as forty-six other reunions had ended, excepting that they did not talk their battles over again so vehemently as on former occasions. Indeed, they had talked themselves out. They were "waiting" now, and the old bottle of wine set in the center of their table was a symbol of fatalism, mute testimony to the inexorable law of human life. Next day we reported it as usual in our local paper.

At about ten-thirty o'clock of the following evening—to be exact, the seventeenth day of August, 1912—Mrs. Samuel Hod, wife of the *Telegraph's* editor, while working in her kitchen, heard a frightful scream come from somewhere in the neighborhood.

Mrs. Hod rushed to the door. Outside was a clear, warm summer night. Across the picket fence that separated the Hod yard from the rear yards of the houses facing on Pleasant Street, she could see a light in the kitchen of the Fuller boy's house—young Jack Fuller, grandson of Dashing Captain Jack of years gone by. The neighborhood was very quiet during those two minutes she stood there listening in her fright.

Then suddenly that scream was repeated—sharp, clear, terrible! It came from the home across the picket fence. It was Betty Fuller screaming. From the agony in the cries something ghastly had happened. Mrs. Hod ran through her house and called to her husband. Sam helped his wife over the back fence and they made their way under the Fuller clothes-line, through the back shed, and into the little sitting-room.

Betty Fuller was down on the floor. She was face downward, her head protected by her arm. Two feet from her, between the reading-table and the door into the dining-room, was her nine-months-old baby. Holding himself unsteadily between the casings of the hall door was young Jack, his face the color of cold ashes, his lips parched, drops of sweat, heavy as glycerin, standing on his forehead.

"What's happened?" demanded Sam.

But he saw what had happened; and his wife saw; and so did the neighbors. The baby's crib was mute witness to what had occurred. It was overturned—between Jack and his little family.

"Betty! Betty!" cried Mrs. Hod, kneeling down to the young mother's assistance.

"My baby! My only, only, little baby!" moaned the girl.

"Tell me," roared Sam to the father, "how did this happen?"

"I came in—sick—I guess—I guess—I did n't see the kid's crib. I fell over against it! I knocked it over—"

The neighbor woman had picked up the little body.

"It's—dead!" she whispered hoarsely.

Sam whirled on Jack.

"Sick!" he roared. "Sick! The h—— you was sick! You was drunk! You're drunk now! See what you've done? You've killed your own kid—!"

At his words the girl shrieked again, that long agonizing terrible shriek that brought more neighbors.

"It was an accident," whispered the Fuller boy thickly.

"It would n't have been an accident if you'd behaved yourself and cut out this coming home drunk."

The woman picked up the girl and got her to the sofa. Over and over she kept moaning: "My baby! My only, only, little baby!"

The place filled with neighbors. After a while came Doctor Johnson—who was our coroner—and Mike Hogan, our chief of police.

Mike was at a loss whether to arrest the father or not. Sam dispelled his doubts.

"When the boy comes to himself and gets the stuff out of his brain, he'll feel bad enough, Mike," the fatherly old editor said. "The memory of it will be enough punishment. After all, he didn't do it intentionally."

"He's no good, sorr," stormed Mike, indicating the young father while he grew husky-throated at the pathos of the little mother's grief.

"Yes, he is, Mike. This is really Dick Fuller's—his father's—fault. He should n't ever have left the lad ten thousand dollars and no balance-wheel. Let these two children alone. It's for them to settle between themselves. Jack's got the Fuller blood in him from away back; and I think this will bring out his manhood. It's a fearful price for a young father to have to pay, Mike. But maybe, after all, it's for the best."

The neighbors left the boy and girl to their tragedy.

The marriage of old Wilbur Nieson's daughter Elisabeth to young Jack Fuller had been talked of in our town for a month and a day. Richard Fuller, son of Dashing Captain Jack, had grown to manhood, made considerable money and died, leaving it to his boy, whereupon the lad started straight for the devil.

Before he had come into his inheritance, he had been "keeping company" with little Betty Nieson, who worked in the box-factory and lived with her derelict

father in the scrubby old Nieson place out Cedar Street on the edge of town. The boy drank considerably and the rumor found its way into our newspaper office that, despite his money, Betty would not marry him until he had conquered the habit.

A town's mind is a child's mind and it readily sympathized with the struggle that the Nieson girl was making in her poor blind handicapped way to climb out of the environment which she had always known, and make something of herself. Then suddenly one day Jack Fuller sold his racy automobile. He and Betty were married and they furnished a modest home on Pleasant Street. One-half of the town said it was because Jack had gone through his inheritance. The other half said that it was his wife's influence over him. Certainly to all appearances the girl was making a desperate and commendable struggle not only to raise herself up but to compel Jack to be a man. Then the half of the home-folks which had claimed the way Jack squandered his money had been at the bottom of his marriage, were apparently in the right. For shortly after the pitiful little marriage the boy was seen frequenting the Whitney House bar as much as ever.

Now came this additional sorrow into the girl's life. She had married the lad trying to get away from the hereditary taint of the Nieson blood. It had come to her now that there appeared to be a taint also in the Fuller blood. She had lost her baby. The Hods said that there was a light burning in the Fuller tenement all that night.

The baby was buried the next day. It was a pathetic little funeral, just a prayer or two by Doctor Dodd of the Methodist Church, and then Blake Whipple, the undertaker, took care of the interment.

The evening of the day that the poor little shaver was laid underground, Mrs. Hod entered the tenement to console the bereaved girl. She entered without knocking. She paused at the threshold, made rigid by the sight before her.

For Jack Fuller was down on his knees before the girl he had married. His finely-shaped head was buried in her lap. He was sobbing freakishly, for men do not

know how to weep. And the girl seated there on the sofa was staring into unseeing space with a holy look upon her beautifully plain face; her slender shapely fingers toying with the boy's wavy hair.

"Never, never, never — will I touch a drop of the stuff as long as I live, Betty," he choked between his tears. "I don't care — what the provocation is — I won't ever do it. I've been a cad, Betty. I have n't been a Fuller at all — but I'll show you I can be. I'll make up for this. We've lost the baby, Betty — but it's brought me to my senses. I'm — done! I swear it before God, Betty. I'm — done!"

The girl never knew a neighbor was looking on, unable to withdraw without disclosing her presence.

"If that's the price, Jack," she replied softly, divinely, "—if that's the price—and you'll keep your word—I'll pay it! Jackie dear—I love you. I've loved you all along. But this has always been the way with me. There was Dad. Rum got him—rum stole him away from me. When he was himself he was all right. But he drank and then beat me—he made me want to kill myself just because I was a Nieson—because his blood half saturated with rum—was in my veins. I married you, Jackie—because I hoped to pull myself up from being a Nieson. I hoped to show folks what I wanted to be—what I tried so hard to be. Every one knows the Niesons are worthless trash, the scum of the town. And I thought—being your wife—the wife of a Fuller—things would be different. The liquor seemed robbing me of you too, Jack. But if this—has given you back to me—yes—I'll pay the price. It's all right, Jack. I'll take your word that you'll never, never take a drop of the stuff again."

Mrs. Hod succeeded in getting out without being discovered. She went home and told her husband. Sam shook his head sadly.

"I hope so," commented the worldly wise old newspaper man, who frequently understood two-legged human folks better than they understood themselves. "I hope so, indeed. I'd do anything under God's heaven to help him. But I'm afraid for him — afraid for him and the

girl. It sure will be hell for her if the lad breaks his promise—just *once!*”

But to his everlasting credit, let it be set down that the Fuller blood came uppermost in Jack. He did not break his promise. But what the poor boy went through in that succeeding six months only a reticent God in His heaven knows.

Jack had sold his automobile for two hundred dollars. Now he transferred what was left of his legacy from a checking account in the corner bank to the savings department. He went to work for Will Pease mending automobiles in the Paris Garage.

He grew thin and haggard with the struggle he was making. Some brainless young roustabouts in our town tried to get him to drink again just for the sake of winning him back to his old habits. They actually did get him into a bar one night with a glass of liquor before him. Then I guess it came to him what he was doing. The Fuller blood in him made a great convulsion for the upper hand—and won! He smashed the glass into the tempter's eyes and stumbled out into the raw cold night—and home.

The boy came home to his childless wife one night and said:

“Betty—it's hell!” he said. “I'm all burned out inside, Betty—”

“Jack,” she cried piteously, “you're not going to give way after—after the price—we paid.”

“Not if I can help it, Betty,” he replied. “But I need help, girl. I need some sort of discipline that'll straighten me out and help me physically. Betty—I've got a chance—to get into the quartermaster's department of the Vermont National Guard—”

“You mean—be a soldier?” she cried.

“And why not, Betty?” he said. “My grandfather was a soldier. You know what he did in the Civil War; what he means to the Grand Army men. It's in my blood, I guess, Betty—”

“Jack!” she cried. “Don't leave me now! Don't leave me alone! Don't! Don't! There's too many memories, Jack. I ain't—brave enough, Jack!”

He sank down on the sofa and hid his burning face in his hands.

"God help me!" he groaned. "I want to win out, but I'm all wrong inside. Oh, Betty!"

She tried in her poor pitiful way to help him. She did help him—a little bit. But Jack was nearer right than he knew. He joined the Y. M. C. A. that winter and went in for athletics. But two nights a week "on the floor" was n't rigorous enough for him.

Pinkie Price, our star reporter, came into the newspaper office one forenoon and exclaimed,

"Hey, you know that Fuller chap that killed his kid when he come home stewed? Well, what do you suppose he's up to? You know the preparedness scare and the trouble with Mexico and everything? Well, he's startin' to raise a company right here in Paris—a company o' real soldiers—so 's to have 'em ready in case we get into the Europe scrap. They're goin' to drill four nights a week and Sundays in Academy Hall."

"It is n't surprising," commented Sam Hod. "He comes from a family of soldiers. Well, I hope he does. If he's captain of a company of men like his granddaddy was in '63 he'll have his position to maintain and that won't mean flirting with whisky. Good for the boy! I said he had the right stuff in him. Go see him and write his scheme up, Pinkie. The *Telegraph* 'll give it all the preferred position it deserves."

"Hey," said Pinkie, shifting suddenly to another subject through the association of ideas, "—d'yer know that old Martin Chisholm kicked off last night? Yep; heart disease!"

Sam looked around the office at our faces.

"So 'The Toast to Forty-five' has narrowed down to Henry Weston, Uncle Joe Fodder, and Wilbur Nieson! Too bad, too bad!"

Jack Fuller, out of regard for the little wife's feelings, did not take the quartermaster's job. But he did organize the Paris Home Guard. Soldier blood ran in his veins. The "Fuller Fire-eaters" as our town named them, was a crack company. The place Jack held as head of that company was as a tonic to the lad; it gave him some-

thing to think about, to interest himself in when the hankering for the fellowship of our three saloons became too powerful. When the trouble with Mexico became acute there were weeks when the local boys, catching his enthusiasm, drilled six nights in succession in their rooms up-stairs in the Cedar Street Engine-house. They had regular army uniforms and were connected somehow with the State National Guard—we never could just understand the connection.

As for "The Toast to Forty-five," the climax didn't come in August, 1916. When Bennington Battle Day rolled around that year all three men were still living who had been alive the reunion before.

In February the United States severed relations with Germany. In April the United States declared war. In June ten million young Americans enrolled themselves for the draft. And in July, when all the confusion of the draft had cleared away, it was found that half of "Fuller's Fire-eaters" had been called upon to fill the Paris quota of Vermont's two thousand.

But Jack Fuller's name was not drawn.

On a certain July night in the little tenement which they still kept on Pleasant Street, the Fuller boy stood beside the table in the same room where his small son had been killed in the overturning of the cradle a while before, with his face as white as chalk and Betty before him on her knees where she had sunk down in her misery, clutching him convulsively.

"Don't go and leave me, Jack," she moaned. "Oh, Jack, don't do it. You're all I've got, Jack—and there are so many unmarried men to go—!"

"My grandfather led the Paris boys in '63, Betty," he said hoarsely. "My great-great-grandfather led a company in the battle of Bennington. The country's calling again, Betty. It's up to a Fuller to take his place at the head of the Paris lads once more. I've got the company, Betty. They're wild to enlist as a body and I can get the regular appointment as their captain—"

"Wait till your turn comes in the draft, Jack. Don't leave me, now, Jack. There are so many unmarried men to go. If the country wants you so bad that they call

all the married men, I'll try to be brave and give you up, Jack. But wait for that — tell me you will!"

"I can't stand it to see the boys I've drilled march away with another chap at their head, Betty."

"Jack!" she cried hysterically, "it was *you* that took little Edward away from me! And now — you're taking yourself. You don't have to go — yet. You're taking yourself — yourself — because — you don't love me —"

It was the first time in two or three years that she had taunted him with what he had done to their child. It reacted upon him as though she had struck him a blow.

"Betty!" he cried hoarsely. "Don't say that, Betty. You're mad over this thing — you're asking me to hide behind the skirts of women —"

"Jack — I've had so much sorrow — first with Mother, then with Father, then losing the baby so — now with you going away and leaving me — that I can't stand much more, Jack. I'll go mad — really mad, Jack! I can't go back and live again with Father, and see his stumbling footsteps when he comes home drunk, and hear his talk, and see him gibber — I'll have nobody, nobody, to live for! Oh, Jack!"

"You can be as brave as millions of other childless wives all over America, able for a while to care for themselves. You told me once that you hated the Nieson blood in you even if your father was a soldier. You said after we were married that you were trying to pull yourself up and be somebody. You said you were happy because our kids would have Fuller blood in them. And now instead of coming up to the scratch in a real crisis, Betty, you're showing yellow and groveling round like a Nieson. If I'm willing to run the chance of getting shot —"

But he did not go on. Her screams of hysteria began. And the little wife who had stood so much broke down at last.

Doctor Johnson was called. He attended the girl for eight days. During that time, only regard for Jack made the boys hold off in enlisting as a unit altogether for France. Doctor Johnson said that if Jack volunteered

with them, and Betty heard he was going, the shock would kill her. So the boy went around town, torn between love and duty.

And during those days something happened in our community. Wilbur Nieson and Henry Weston died—within a few days of one another. Henry Weston succumbed to kidney trouble which had afflicted him for years. And old Wilbur Nieson—Wilbur Nieson had the “tremors” as we say up here in New England—delirium tremens—one night in the rear of the Whitney House. The boys in the livery found him. The Sons of Veterans buried him. So much for the carefully cherished plans of humankind. For a half-century the members of Farrington Post had saved that rare old Vintage for “The Toast to Forty-five.” And there were not even two old soldiers left of that original company to observe the sentiment. “The Toast to Forty-five” could never be pledged, after all!

A couple of weeks slipped away. August sixteenth approached. The boy came into the office of our little local paper one morning and said:

“I’ve made up my mind; I’m going to France. Instead of having our ranks broken by the draft, all the ‘Fire-eaters’ are enlisting as a body in the National Guard. And I—am going—with them.”

“But your wife?”

“It won’t be any harder for her to stay behind than it is for me to leave. But I’ve got to get into this thing. Something inside of me is firing me to do it. She’ll bear it—somehow.”

“When are you boys going?” asked Sam.

“We’ll be leaving somewhere around the twentieth.”

“The twentieth!” exclaimed Sam. In that moment something occurred to him. “The twentieth!” he exclaimed over again. “And on the sixteenth—the old army men were going to hold their last reunion if only those two had n’t died. Jack—!”

“Yes.”

“Why not—why not—why not have Paris give you boys a royal send-off on that night—the night of the sixteenth—a dinner for you fellows the sixteenth; a

dinner for you fellows in place of the old Grand Army reunion!"

"I guess the boys would be willing," replied Jack with a sad smile.

We printed a long piece in our little local paper about it, that night. Again the Vermont boys were going to war. Again a Fuller was to lead them. Tickets for the farewell dinner were on sale at the Metropolitan Drug-store, five dollars apiece, the proceeds to go to the Red Cross.

Bennington Battle Day came. All preparations for the greatest banquet Paris ever saw were completed. The time-worn custom of having the dinner in the rooms of Farrington Post was abandoned. The Post rooms would never hold the crowd. The dinner was to be held in the assembly hall of the new high school. That was the largest floor-space procurable in Paris.

Sam Hod had three sons in Captain Jack's company — more than any other father in Paris. He was designated as toastmaster for that epochal dinner. At a long table at the head of the hall he was to sit with Uncle Joe Fodder on his right and young Captain Jack Fuller on his left. Beyond, on either side there were grouped officers of the company. Then the rest of the places were filled up with the privates of Fuller's Fire-eaters and the public. The dinner was set for eight o'clock and by ten minutes of eight there were hundreds of Parisians in the hallways and on the sidewalk unable to get standing room in the dining-room, to say nothing of obtaining a seat and a plate.

Promptly on the dot of eight, Otis Hawthorne, leader of the Paris Band, tapped his baton on his music-stand.

With a great crash the apartment was filled to the furthestmost crevices with the thunderous tumult of "The Star Spangled Banner."

Every man and woman in that hall rose to his feet. They sang that song. They sang it as they had never sung it before. Because in that moment the real meaning of the words came home to them.

"— Oh, say, does the Star Spangled Banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the Free, and the Home of the Brave?"

Sam Hod looked at his three lean boys in khaki, that in another week would be only a memory. And his face shone with an emotion he had never known the meaning of before. Women wept like—women. As the chorus died away, cheer on cheer arose and floated out the lowered windows into the soft summer night.

They resumed their chairs. Jack Fuller turned to the editor.

“Who’s this empty chair for on my left?” he demanded.

“Your wife, my son,” the editor replied simply, and Mrs. Hod brought the girl in.

She was white and weak. How the editor’s wife had broken the news to her—persuaded her to come to the hall and sit in the place of honor beside her husband—has been something that we bewhiskered males in the office of our little local paper have never been able to explain. Perhaps Mrs. Hod’s sacrifice of those three tall Yankee lads in Fuller’s Fire-eaters had something to do with it. Anyhow, Betty Fuller was persuaded to come in.

She put out her hands blindly before her as she reached the head table and heard them cheering her husband’s name—and her own. She felt her way into her place. She glanced down into her husband’s surprised face and gave a terrified semblance of a smile. Then the whole room seemed to fuse before her. She has never been able to recollect connectedly the events of that evening.

The dinner began, progressed, and, after the manner of all dinners, at last ended. Sam Hod arose. He clinked on a water-glass with his knife. The hallful saw him and gradually grew quiet.

It was a beautiful speech that the editor made. He began with the part Vermont has played in every war in which America has ever engaged. He told the story of the boys who marched away in ’61 behind John Farrington. He recounted the story of Captain Farrington’s death; the succession of “Jack Fuller the First” to the place of honor in the Company, the brilliant war-record of the regiment. He told of the home-coming; of the banquet fifty-two years before. He told smoothly of the

events leading up to America's entry into the war. His quotation of the President's famous indictments against Germany brought ovation after ovation from the home-folks, who were worked up to hysterical pitch. And when it was over the editor said:

"To-night, before sitting down to this farewell banquet to our sons, many of whom are going away from us never to return—to-night I was the recipient of a strange request. It came from the last survivor of that famous Company of Sixty-two who fifty-two years ago saw Dashing Captain Jack Fuller of glorious memory, raise aloft this receptacle of rare vintage and propose a dramatic thing.

"This was the request: By some strange fate the evening when the last toast was to be given to the illustrious dead comes at the terrifically tragic moment when the sons of many of these men are going forward to offer their lives in a new democracy. It has been suggested that nothing could have more approval from Dashing Captain Jack himself—or from all of those one hundred and six brave men who have crossed from the battlefields of earthly life into a blessed reward for their altruism—than that this toast should be given after all—if not by the two survivors, then by the leader of the local heroes who have volunteered to go "Over There" and by their sacrifice make the earth a finer, fairer, better place in which to dwell. "The Toast to Forty-five," famous for fifty-two years, will be given at last amid this assembly of another quota of the Union's soldiers about to go forth to preserve the same great principle for which their fathers laid their all upon the altar."

There was silence for a time. Then came another attempt at another ovation. But it died in the excitement of the thing transpiring at that speaker's table.

Sam Hod was opening the famous vintage.

The seal was broken. Out of that glass retainer came costly sparkling liquor, fifty-two years the prize relic of Farrington Post. Sam reached over. The two glasses of Uncle Joe Fodder and Captain Jack he filled to the brim. He stepped back—back from between Uncle Joe and

Captain Jack — that they might click the rims of their slender goblets together.

“Gentlemen,” cried Uncle Joe in that breathless moment — “The Toast — to — Forty-five!”

Every military man in that room arose to his feet.

Uncle Joe’s withered old lips moved in the sunken face. The skinny hand holding the wine-glass trembled so that the beverage spilled over the edge and splashed on the white table-cloth like a clot of blood.

“Here’s to the gallant Forty-five,” he cried in a high-pitched, crackly voice. “Here’s to Captain John Farrington. And here’s to the men of Company Sixty-two and their posterity. Here’s to — here’s to Captain Jack Fuller and *his* posterity —”

It was an unfortunate sentence at an unfortunate time.

Jack Fuller’s posterity!

Through the lad’s brain must have flashed a picture of a scene in his sitting-room months before when he had paid a fearful price for — something! He had promised — He had promised — He looked around the room. Hundreds of eyes were upon him as he stood there, splendid and erect in olive drab. He glanced around his own table, too. And in that instant he saw — the pale, wan features of his wife!

His arm still holding awkwardly aloft the glass, Jack looked into the faces of that crowd flanking the tables and walls of that great hall.

Something came to him — the scenes, the associations — reincarnation, perhaps — the blood of his forefathers — heredity — in that great instant he was prompted to do a great and dramatic thing for the joy of the spectacular, the call of the dramatic.

Out of Joe Fodder’s toothless mouth came voiceless words —

“I’ve — gone and forgot my speech! You say something, Jack. You say it!”

Sam Hod racked his brain for words to save the situation. All Paris waited. And then — in the silence — came a rich, strong, boyish voice:

“I’ll give a toast — to Forty-five!”

It was Captain Jack. Two hundred pairs of eyes were

fixed upon him. He knew perfectly that two hundred pairs of eyes were fixed upon him.

This is the thing that he did:

Deliberately into his dirty coffee-cup he poured the blood-red liquid. As his grandfather would have done, with the same exaggerated flourish the boy took from his pocket a snow-white handkerchief. With that napkin he wiped flawlessly the delicate receptacle which had held the liquor. Then he leaned over. From a glass pitcher he poured into that cleansed wine-glass its fill of pure cold sparkling water. In an instant he held it aloft.

"Fellows!" he cried. "A toast! a toast not with wine—for wine with its blood-color belongs to the times which are going—which we hope are passing forever—I'm drinking a toast with crystal water—emblematic of the clean white civilization which is coming—for which we're going 'Over There' to fight and die.

"Here's to every man who ever did a noble thing; volunteering his strength to help protect the weak! Here's to every lad who ever fought out the terrible question in his heart and put the Greater Good above his life-hopes and ambitions. Here's to every soul that ever laid in the dark, thinking of those at home, knowing that in the charge of dawn he might become to them but a bitter-sweet memory of days when every hour was a golden moment and time but a thing to pass away. Here's to the dead—the illustrious dead—those who fell in battle, those of Forty-five, the men of Sixty-two, the men of every age and every land who fought the good fight nobly, to the best that was in them—for the things they believed to be right—and have gone to take finer and better orders under a Greater General, the Commander of Commanders, the Prince of—Peace!"

He paused. He drew a long breath. He looked down the table. And he continued: "But along with our toast for the soldiers of the dead, boys—while the opportunity is ours—why not give also a toast—another kind of toast—to the soldiers of the living? Not ourselves, boys—but the ones—we're leaving behind. It is little enough we can do for them!"

His gaze wandered up to his glass. In a strange, inspired voice, he cried softly:

“A toast! — a toast, also, to the truest and best soldiers of all — the mothers, the wives, and the girls we are leaving behind!

“Here’s to the toil-hardened hands who cared for us when as helpless little kids, we were unable to care for ourselves. Here’s to the tears they have shed over our little torn clothes; the pillows that have been wet in the midnight with anxiety, longing, and heartache that we might be spared to do our duty as men. Here’s to the anguish they have suffered, the prayers they have prayed, the sacrifices they have made, the toil they have borne — all to be laid on the altar of war, all to be wiped out in a moment, perhaps, by a splinter of shrapnel or the thrust of a bayonet. Here’s to the nobility of their anguish when they come to learn we are no more; and the beauty of their faces when the divinity in their hearts tells the story upon their care-lined foreheads that they would climb the same weary Golgotha again — go through the same Gethsemane — bear the same cross — though they knew all along the end which it meant.

“Here’s to the wives we loved in the days before War came upon us. Here’s to the promises they made us — to be ours until death came between us. Here’s to the suffering they have borne for our thoughtlessness; the hours when they have looked into the future and wondered if the love that we promised was worth the price they were paying. Here’s to the hopes and the fears, the joys and the sorrows that have come to them — that are coming to them now — that are coming to them in the years on ahead with ever greater portion. Here’s to their courage and noble endeavor, given so pathetically to us chaps who sometimes — forget. May we die as faithfully in the cause to which we have pledged ourselves as they will live in the memory of what-might-have-been in the lean years when there are forms sitting in fantasy beside them in the firelight and our voices are heard in the homes we made with them — no more.

“And here’s to the girls we are leaving behind!

Here's to the kisses they have given us under the stars of many summers—the memory of their hands and their lips and their eyes! Here's to the weight in their souls and the pain that will hallow the memories that will haunt them through the years. Here's to the sighs and the shadows, the heart-hopes and the longing! God grant in His goodness their fidelity is rewarded!

“These are the things to which we drink—the men of yesterday—and the memory of their heroism which has been—and the women of to-day and whose heroism is to be. With the great incentive of these two in our hearts, boys—let us drink and go away to fight like men—to honor the first—to sanctify the second.”

He clinked his glass against that of speechless Uncle Joe Fodder's—and they drank—Uncle Joe drinking his wine with a hand which trembled so that the liquid stained his withered claw like a scarlet wound.

The hall was strangely silent.

Sam turned to his wife. “That boy never composed that beautiful speech alone, Mary,” he said—“not impromptu like that!”

Down the hall an old lady whispered to her daughter:

“Alice! Alice!—His granddaddy made just such a speech—almost word for word—the night John Farrington's company bade us women-folks good-by.”

As the hall was being cleared for the big farewell dance, Sam came to the boy.

“Laddie,” he demanded, “where did you learn that speech?”

“What speech?” asked the boy.

“You know *what* speech—the toast!”

“I don't know, Mr. Hod. I just looked at the faces—and the wine—and—and—Betty!—and it just came out.”

“Is that the truth?”

“Sure, it's the truth. What was it I said that was so awful wonderful?”

“Don't you remember what you said?”

The boy laughed ashamedly. “—I could n't repeat it if it cost me my life,” he replied. “It—just—came—out!”

Late that night the old editor lay in his bed thinking of many things.

"The things in life are far stranger than the things in story books," he said. Then in the velvet dark he whispered: "Strange! Strange!"

Dashing Captain Jack Fuller, true to his blood and his birthright, went away on the following day at the head of his sturdy volunteers. They entrained at ten o'clock for Fort Ethan Allen.

Truly the boy did not remember the words of that toast which he gave that memorable evening. But one thing he does remember. He remembers the words of the girl he had married as he took her in his arms in those last few sweet moments following the final breakfast in the little home:

"It was the Nieson in me that did n't want you to go, Jack," she choked brokenly. "Up to last night I did n't want you to go. But when you would n't drink the wine — when you had the courage to do what you did in front of all those people — I was ashamed of my selfishness. Jackie dear — I'm the proudest, happiest, miserablest woman in all this town!"

He pressed her to him. He kissed her — an embrace that left her weak and limp.

"And you can count on me, Jack," she said, "I'll — do — my — duty — too! Even — if. you should never come back; remember I said — I was sorry for the way I've acted; I'll — do — my — duty — too!"

"Good-by, Betty!" he choked.

"Good-by — my soldier!" she lisped — bravely — piteously.

But she sent him away — with a smile!

She's working now at her old place in Amos Wheeler's box-shop. She closed down the little home on Pleasant Street partly because she could not keep up the expense, partly because she could not endure — the memories. She's living out in her father's old place at the far end of Cedar Street.

Poor little, dear little, brave little woman!

We know from his letters to our local paper, that Jack

Fuller has reached France. The girl is alone, earning five dollars a week in the box-factory to support herself. The lad is "Over There" in the Whirlpool and the Nightmare—and where the fighting is thickest, there we believe Jack Fuller will be found.

But somehow, we feel that Jack Fuller will not fall. We feel there is coming a great and a glorious day for our little town of Paris up here in these mountains. In fancy we can see a morning when a great crowd is going to mill around and through the platforms and the railroad yards of our station. The hour is coming when a train whistle will sound far down the Greene River valley. The minutes will pass. The whistle will sound nearer. Finally in the lower end of the yards we will see a great furl of seething smoke from an oncoming locomotive. Another and a third whistle will shriek as a great high-breasted mogul comes bearing down upon us, seeming to cry out to us from the decreasing distance: "I've got them! I've got them! I'm bringing them back! Every mother's son of them! They're in these coaches I'm pulling behind me now!" And the train will come to a grinding stop, and amid cheer after cheer and the gyrations of the Paris band seeking to blow itself inside out, down from that train will come the soldiers of Uncle Sam—the boys who never have been and never can be whipped—great bronzed men with lean jaws, faces the hue of copper and muscles as hard as billets of steel. Car after car will disgorge them—men who met the Great Problem, offered themselves, ran the risk, fought the fight, gave their last full measure of devotion, and have come back home to women who cannot trust themselves to speak—only hold out their arms mutely.

And we feel certain that in that great day, after the Nightmare is over and the world is a fairer, better world, that one of those great bronzed heroes will gather up in his war-hardened arms a slender little girl in the plainest of white shirt-waists and black skirts, with the paste dried on the poor little workaday clothes and the worn shoes turning her step over cruelly. He will gather her up while the tears fall clumsily, for men do

not know how to weep. And there will be no more weariness in her homeward walk in that twilight. After all, not all the boys are going to die. Many are coming back, hundreds of thousands of them. There will be other toasts to Forty-five pledged by the living. It must be so, for God still rules in His heaven and will make all right with the world.

Yet just now — for Betty Fuller — the way is lonesome and her pillow is wet with her tears in the midnight. But —

She sent her man away with a smile.

Poor little, dear little, brave little woman!

All over America her name is legion!