

"AS A RESURRECTION"

Tender Tribute to Memory of Young

Ensign by Brilliant Former Mem-
ber of Staff of This Paper,

Written Nine Years Ago.

Before Funeral.

By W. E. CHRISTIAN.

Nine years ago, Worth Bagley, Ensign United States Navy, killed in action by Spaniards in Cardenas Bay, lay before the people who loved him and among whom he was born, in the Capitol Square of the State in whose capital he was born. There was the regis-
trum of the historic elms. There he was swept over. Later the tears were swept away in the proud realization that there was a hero in front, about to be lowered into a hero's grave. Then the volley awoke even the dear old mother's heart, and she said to herself, "I am giving up more than a son; I am giving up a hero!"

Let us hope, if such a thing is possible, that she was comforted by the thought.

Now he is no longer prostrate. He stands! Within a few feet of where he then lay, he now stands for all the world to see. I loved him in life and behold him as resurrected. As William Cullen Bryant said of the statue of Walter Scott at the unveiling of which he made the address, the artist who put the statue before the world must have had breathed into him a part of God's own creative power. So it is with this "immortal youth."

He stands well—with one foot forward and sword in hand and at rest. His chest and chin are well thrown forward, according to the hearts of brave men—especially according to the hearts of the men among whom he was among the front. His face—not too much of a vulgar photograph to blot out the spirituality of the

"By my good faythe, sayd the noble Persyve,
Now haste thou rede (judge) full right;
Yet will I never yelde me to the
Whyll I may stonde and fyght."

I had not been mistaken. Later came the story in all its blood-red splendor. In the midst of all the narration, I clung fast only to one saying, because it seemed almost a companion-piece to the words of the Knight of Otterburn's battle. Here it is:

"Key West, Fla., May 12, 1898.

"Wm. Russ, Mayor Raleigh, N. C.

"Ensign Bagley instantly killed by fragments of a bursting shell while at post of duty aboard torpedo boat Winslow in action off Cardenas yesterday. * * * The Navy unites in grief for the loss of so gallant an officer. BERNADOU."

That is enough.

It was the way in which he wished to die. That much he had said in my presence. With all grace and tenderness of manner, there was the eagerness constantly expressed of standing forward, when possible, at the post of danger. Such eagerness seemed to play grimly even about his moments of levity or laughter. A conversation comes to me between him and a cynical young officer aboard one of the fleet, at Norfolk. It took place in the Navy yard while the Winslow was dry-docked. The young officer saw no chance in the navy for advancement. In his reply, Worth Bagley's face, I remember, glowed with earnestness, when he said he thought it depended upon the determination of the man. He was then waiting for the Winslow to be put into shape after the narrow escape it had had in the terrible gale off Fire Island, in which young Bagley distinguished himself by the rescue of two men on a drifting barge. Then it was that I had an opportunity of observing at close range the confidence with which his commanding officer, Bernadou, depended upon him. He even sought Bagley in social converse, and at a charming little dinner aboard the Winslow he took occasion more than once in the most companion-like way to compliment his judgment and cour-



ENSIGN WORTH BAGLEY, U. S. N., from a photograph taken while a Midshipman at the United States Naval Academy.

age and endurance.

And Worth Bagley took it all with even a blush. I could almost fancy in Lieutenant Bernadou's account of the engagement, while he lay wounded on the Hudson, that his mind was upon his cherished young executive officer. "We went under orders from the commander of the Wilmington," he said. It had not been his to ask why—it was his only to go.

Twenty-four years of age, Ensign Bagley had, in the words to me of a friend, accomplished "what a man would have been willing to live a hundred years for."

His life seemed to have marched unbrokenly up to its crown. He had been a cadet like others. Yet amidst them all there was in him a certain quality, not self-assertiveness, which kept him going forward. Ambition? Yes, there seems to me to have been much of it in him, but his chief qualities, as I knew him, were tenderness and nobility, a certain "central dignity," too. This "central dignity," I have seen exhibited in the most unlooked for and quiet way in conversation with those about him. It was almost without his being aware of it the power that seemed to me to win for him all that is implied in the "elder brother."

It was composed in him for the most part of love and decision. It cannot be wrong for me to say that I have never seen a man more exquisitely tender to those in his own home. For that matter, he came from a home where the atmosphere was only that of tenderness and good word for all men and women. May not this thing of tenderness, after all, be the food upon which

youth's great spirit—shows the overflowing of so much more! And the city of it all!

The pose is as I remember him—if he does not stand staunchly enough for his natural self—the atmosphere of strength and simplicity and sweetness is there.

The figure is one that we all love to dwell upon—come from where we may.

Let us take courage, mothers and sisters, and cease our weeping for the joy that he has given his country in the splendor of his death.

Let me repeat a line that I wrote about this sweet boy when he was brought home:

"His image haunts this room tonight,
A form of mingled mist and light
From that far coast
Welcome beneath this roof of mine,
Welcome, this vacant chair is thine,
Dear guest and ghost."

(W. E. Christian in News and Observer, May 15, 1898.)

"Farewell, I wot that thou art slain."
—From an old Ballad on the Battle of Flodden Field.

I do not hope to do anything more than to tell, as simply as I can, something of the personal life and surroundings of Worth Bagley as I knew them. This much ever I should keep as my own unless I knew that what I am saying were coming graciously to those of a home which, in the most fragrant sense, has been for these four years to me, also, a home.

As a newspaper man, I do not feel that I could write about my friend. By a strange cruelty in the limitations of the newspaper craft, men know that the phrase, whether for the dead or

nobility comes to perfection, and may not this thing of nobility, which, after form, he the quality that causes men to smile in the flash of bursting shells as Worth Bagley smiled?

I lay stress upon this, because I cannot account for this hero of Cardenas in any other way. In one sense he had never left the arms of a mother—the pressure of whose hand he had felt upon his shoulder at every point from childhood to Cardenas. The manner in which that love was returned is one of the memories of the Beautiful which I treasure.

It is told that when the little Winslow was writhing in the sea wounded to the death, when the little craft alone, and in front, had been shot to the heart and Bernadou had signalled that she was disabled, Bagley yet stood with his men amidst the guns. The force of the boat had been spent; the Hudson was alongside with her lines. He had not moved. The line was about to be thrown. "Don't miss it," cried an officer from the Hudson. Then it was that a smile came over the boy's face, with the fire of the Spaniards now even more frightful than ever.

I wonder if that was an answering smile to one that came to him alone; I wonder if the thought flashed at that instant upon him:

"* * * thy own sweet smile I see
The same that oft in childhood solaced me."

Knowing him as I did, I felt when I read of this that his smile was his last mute message home.

A man more unselfish in word and thought I never knew. Gentle of voice and chivalrous in mental tone, he was free without familiarity, as robust in spirit as he was joyous in jest. Of ardent temperament, his self-control kept one constantly mindful of a reserve power not seen at once. With discriminating knowledge of men, his simplicity was sometimes startlingly charming. If he were guarded, he was above all entirely natural, unconscious of himself, unsuspecting of others.

"And then to die so young and leave unfinished what he might achieve. For now he haunts his native land As an immortal youth."

Let us try to think of him as the "immortal youth," whose death brave men may envy, and whose life it is given to few women of this world to furnish forth for the cause of country.

I cannot yet feel that I will not see him again and talk with him and tell

him how all trembled for him as he stood at the guns. But I forget myself—he fell, pressing the flag close to his heart. His manner of death was a logical culmination of his manner of life.

While the nation is richer by one hero, and men between these oceans take glory to America for this "immortal youth," be it not forgot that in the midst of the shouts that will yet greet even the mention of his name, there be one heart helplessly crying: "Give me back my boy!" But if the boy were sustained when, the supreme test came, how much more may she, who could bear this manner of man, be sustained even now. God help her.

"His presence haunts this room to-night
A form of mingled mist and light
From that far coast
Welcome, beneath this roof of mine,
Welcome, this vacant chair is thine."

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