

"We went on the double, guns loaded and bay'nits fixed."—Page 18.

Old Soldier

BY CHARLES J. McGUIRK

ILLUSTRATIONS (FRONTISPIECE) BY J. CLINTON SHEPHERD

AMOS APPLEBY, leaning forward on his cane, sat listening drowsily as the regular bimonthly meeting of the Israel Dodge Post of the Grand Army of the Republic marched along its routine.

The heavy scented air of the late June afternoon slid lethargically through the windows on the fourteen old veterans who were as religious in attendance as if the meeting were a rite—which, indeed, it was.

Amos's drowsing mind was a field of indistinct pictures: of blossoming apple-trees and fresh-turned earth; of horses bending their shoulders against the traces of a plough; of growing things; of a Something that impended, a Something that would not materialize.

"... Circular here about a trip to Gettysburg. You boys come up after meeting and look it over."

He sat up straight, his interest focussed on the adjutant.

"What's that 'bout Gettysburg?" he inquired.

"Tour of the battle-field. They show you around."

"Guess they can't tell Amos much about it." George Ketteridge chuckled. "Wounded there, wasn't you, Amos?"

But Amos did not hear. Gettysburg! The Something had materialized. He sat staring into the past, to July 2, 1863, the

greatest day of his life. He must go back and live it over again. That's what he'd been trying to think of all these weeks. Suddenly a tremendous excitement possessed him.

No one could notice his excitement. His respectful townsmen, watching him while he waited for the automobile which was to take him home, saw only the familiar erect figure of Amos Appleby, wealthy farmer, clad now in the black soft hat and the blue suit, the coat of which was heavy with brass buttons and the pendent star of the Grand Army, hanging from its eagle on his breast. The ghost of a youthful soldierly robustness hung about this man with the gray mustache and the tiny imperial.

But John Allen, his old comrade's grandson, veteran of the Great War and the new husband of his granddaughter, sensed it almost immediately when he drew up his car at the curb.

"Great meetin'," old Amos told him as they climbed the steep mountain road leading to his pleasant farm in Pinefield. "Got through a mess of business and began to figger a little on a trip down to Gettysburg. In a week it'll be sixty years since the battle.

"Son, for years I been wantin' to go back. Ain't seen the old place since I fought there. That's where I got the bay'nit stab that almost finished me.

Would have if your old granddad didn't happen to knock out the Johnny Reb who was after me. He was strong as an off-ox, John. And you're the dead picture of him.

"Don't see no reason why the three of us, Mary and you and me, couldn't make the trip. You two youngsters ain't really had a honeymoon, what with the work around the farm, though I know you ain't specially hankerin' for it. No young couple cares where they are while marriage is new. Well, we'll ponder it a lee-tle."

They swung through the gateway of the farm and bumped over the poplar-bordered roadway to the rambling white farmhouse, with its climbing ivy vines and its air of hospitality. He descended shakily, bowing under the invisible weight of the heavy years, and as shakily climbed the steps of the wide porch and sank into his own wide wicker chair with its padded seat cushion.

"Mary!" he summoned. "Oh, Mary, what you doin'? Smell some good cookin' goin' on. Bet we'll have a nice supper."

A pleasant, blue-eyed girl with hair of ash came from the house in answer to his summons, wiping floury hands on her gingham apron. Gently she took his cane from his hands and laid it within his reach.

"We're going to have fritters for supper," she said. Her voice was full and throaty. "Was it a nice meeting? And are you tired?"

"Tired!" he growled. "Me tired? Guess you think I'm gettin' old. Goin' on a trip soon."

She glanced at him with keen appraisal. Amos Appleby always said his granddaughter looked him over much as did his wife, the first Mary, long since dead and lying in the small cemetery beside the little white church. Sometimes, as it is with old men, the present grew a little dim. And in such times he thought his granddaughter was his wife, and the tall, silent John Allen, her husband, his stanch comrade who went with him to war and farmed the adjoining farm until his death.

"Trip?" she asked. "Who is going on a trip?"

He chuckled. "You and me and John.

Goin' to be your honeymoon. Down to Gettysburg."

"But we can't leave the farm now."

"What's there to do the hired man and girl can't 'tend to?"

"Why—" she began, and then remembered that the thick crop of hay, ripened by an extraordinarily hot summer, was even now being cut. The routine work could be performed by the help, just as he said. She went back into the house, already in the grip of plans for the trip.

Amos Appleby sat on his porch, looking over the farm stretching before him. It was alive with growing things. He could see the hayfield, most of the hay still standing, golden and reedlike, slashed through in lines where the mowers had already been at work; and the slaughtered grass lay neat, like rows of soldier dead.

The cattle munched contentedly in the pasture close beyond and the rest of his vision stretched past green clover fields and opulent areas of ripening wheat and oats. The vegetable garden was behind the house, but some of it peeped out at him, the half-brown corn-stalks reminding him, as they always did, of soldiers all in a row. The tomato-vines, the pumpkins, destined to go golden and succulent after the frosts, the parsley beds, the peas and beans and the rest of the vegetables; and beyond the peeping garden, the orchards, like an army corps on parade, green and heavy with concealed and ripening fruit.

The air was heavy-laden with the sweet aroma of growing things, with sights and smells to delight the heart of any farmer. And Amos was a good farmer. But in the glow of that late afternoon he cared little for the things that had hitherto filled his conscientious life. He was listening to an insistent call.

His heart was filled with the prophecy of a coming delight and his mind with plans for a long-deferred journey. In a week he would be in Gettysburg, the scene of the greatest moment in his life.

The boys, he reflected, were marching on—the boys who had gone away from all the posts of the country through the years, and the boys who lay wearily down at Gettysburg and Shiloh and Antietam and Vicksburg and all the battle-fields. Fourteen comrades had left Israel Dodge

Post in the last year in flag-draped coffins, to be laid to rest to the firing of volleys and the sweet notes of bugles playing the soldier's lullaby. There were only nineteen left, and they were dropping like leaves in October. Old Father Time was as ruthless as the battle-guns, mowing them down, mowing them down.

He wondered where the dead comrades were and what they were doing. Marching, he reckoned, and cursing their officers for forcing them on; bivouacking and talking over the folks at home and what they would do when the war was over; advancing in fierce charges against the enemy or holding their own positions stubbornly against him.

Amos had his own belief. He believed that all the soldiers of all the wars in which the United States had ever fought occupied a great plain in the Hereafter. There camped the Continentals in their ragged buff and blue, with the stern and beloved Washington at General Headquarters; the soldiers of 1812, General Andrew Jackson, the red-headed and fiery, commanding; under General Winfield Scott, the fighters of the Mexican War, quartered with Sam Houston and his Texans, the gallant defenders of the Alamo; Amos's own with their yelling, chivalrous enemies under General Robert E. Lee, the great tactician and gentleman. And what a galaxy of heroes—Grant, Lee, Meade, Bragg, Rosecrans, Kearny, Phil Sheridan, Stonewall Jackson, Forrest, Pickett—all of the leaders of the Union and Confederacy, possibly talking it all over. In a newer section, the soldiers of the Boxer Uprising, the Spanish-American War and the Cuban Occupation, with Roosevelt, the statesman, given place here because he was also a great soldier; the youngsters of the Great War, their wounds and a longing for the earth they had just quitted fresh upon them.

They would be visiting and disparaging each other's war, as soldiers ever will. That would be a place worth going to and living in forever and ever. Amos's was no conventional heaven whose inhabitants wore white robes and played on unaccustomed harps and trumpets.

He sighed. He was infinitely weary. So many of his friends and neighbors had gone. He missed John Allen, the closest

friend he had ever had and the man who had saved his life. John's farm, which he had so faithfully worked, lay there, now part of Amos's own, but Amos took no joy in it. He did not think he could go on living were it not that a Great Something was bearing down upon him. When it came he would be weary no more, but would be filled with a great glory. Now there was nothing but loneliness. He was oppressed like a child touched by the grief of the world.

He slipped into the past. He was coming home, an invalid, and he felt his mother's arms about him as she wept, his father's hand upon his shoulder as he lay in bed. His old wound throbbed and he put his hand above his heart to stay it. Good thing that reb's bayonet had not been a little lower. Work, the heavy, heart-breaking work on the farm; the courtship of Mary, his wife, and their sweet homecoming. Wonderful cook, Mary, but apt to be forgetful at times. He wondered if she had churned that butter and gathered the eggs. Taking them into town that afternoon. And he'd asked John Allen to come see him about the sorrel horse John wanted to buy. Ought to be here any minute now.

"Mary!" he called. "Mary!"

His granddaughter came softly upon the porch.

"That butter ready?"

Her glance was swift and understanding.

"Yes, Amos. Just about finished."

"Better come into town with me this afternoon and pick out that bonnet. I'll hitch the bays. Wish John Allen'd come. Like to know if he wants that sorrel. John does dawdle sometimes."

"He's here," said the girl as her husband came up.

"John, you goin' to buy that critter? If you ain't, I'll bring him to the dealer. He's takin' up stable room and eatin' me out o' house and home."

A look passed between husband and wife.

"His hock is strained pretty bad," said John, rubbing his chin, "and I think he's a wind-sucker."

"Take 'im or leave 'im."

John cogitated, looked up at the sky, and hemmed and hawed, while the old man furtively watched him.

"I'll take him," he said reluctantly at last, "though I'll bet you're whoppin' me again, Amos. You ain't got no conscience." He was talking as he had heard his grandfather talk. "I'll take him away."

Amos was chuckling softly to himself when the girl stepped over and touched him on the shoulder.

"Supper's ready, Gramp," she said.

He slipped back to the present as easily as he had slipped away.

"Eh?" he apologized. "I must ha' been a-dreamin'."

At supper Mary was enthusiastic about the coming trip.

"I'll have to have new clothes," she said. "And I haven't much time to get them in."

"Time enough," Amos assured her. "Long as you got the money."

"Why do you want to go this year?" John asked him.

"Well, it's been a dream o' mine for years," Amos explained. "But one thing and another kept me home. Mostly it was the hayin'. To-day, though, Somethin' come over me. Somethin' kept callin' and callin' to me. 'Go back to Gettysburg. You got to. You got to.' Maybe it's just a fancy. But it walks right along with what I allus wanted to do. And I'm goin' and you youngsters are goin' with me."

The day had been hot and the red sunset touched the world with magic. Light drenched the pulsing earth, which, like Mary, bride and granddaughter, was approaching its fruition. Tree and flower were in full leaf, at the top of their blooming, from which now there could come only harvest and a falling to the sere. The grass was green on the lawn, golden in the field. Colors fought only to achieve harmony. All over the countryside was riotous fragrance above beating life. The two men sat smoking on the porch.

"They're all goin' like the grass out there, both Yanks and Rebs," mused the old man. "The Bible says somethin' about it, somethin' like 'Thy days be numbered.' Down south of the Mason-Dixon line are old veterans like us up here, just livin' on memories. The fires of the Civil War welded this nation."

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Their pipe smoke lifted hazily on the still air and the lowing of cattle came to them. Robins were still foraging for their suppers on the green lawn and singing their evensong among the trees.

"The 2d of July, '63, was a day about like this." Amos broke the silence. "In the fields outside Gettysburg the wheat and the oats and the corn was ripenin'. There never was a peacefuller spot before July the 1st, when Gen'ril Buford, with his four thousand cavalry, and the First and Eleventh Corps held the Rebs till Gen'ril Meade could get his army up 'round Cemetery Ridge. The guns harvested more than green wheat. There was about seven thousand dead on the field. Thus, as the Bible says, it was on the first day when me and your grandpap came up in the 44th New York. We was in Vincent's Brigade of Sykes's Corps and we'd been keepin' 'tween Lee and Washington for a week. Tired? Say, I saw your grandpap go to sleep marchin'."

Amos knocked the ashes from his pipe and laid it beside his chair. Mary slipped out and patted him, but the old man did not heed her. He was living over again his preparations for the battle. John Allen gazed, with eyes hot with their own images of a gray-clad host, speaking a guttural tongue, against which he had fought in the Argonne. A woman's touch must go unheeded here, with the ghost of War hovering about these two veterans: the one in the full strength of his manhood, the other so very old.

"Well," resumed the old soldier, "all that fine long day the two armies just kept a-watchin' each other. Didn't seem like they wanted to start any fightin'. And Lord A'mighty, it was hot. The sun just biled down. Our brigade was lyin' in reserve behind the centre. Gen'ril Daniel E. Sickles, commandin' the left wing, faced the Rebs' right, under Gen'ril Longstreet. Meade ordered Sickles to spread south'ard and connect with Hancock near the bases of the Round Tops, but when he went to take up his position, he found the ground marshy, and he moved his men into high ground on the ridge and into a peach orchard. That left his line overlappin' Hancock's, with a big hole 'tween the forces. And in this hole was Little Round Top.

"Longstreet's cannon opened the battle at four in the afternoon. Then there was hell a-poppin' with bustin' shells and men and horses screamin' with their wounds. The cannonadin' started light and got heavier and heavier. Our guns answered and the sky and earth was full o' death when Longstreet started comin' 'gainst Sickles in line o' battle a mile and a half long.

"Gen'ril Warren, chief engineerin' officer, found Little Round Top unprotected, and he knew what would happen if the Rebs took it. They'd plant artillery there and just naturally crumple the whole left wing. They'd ha' won the battle.

"Even as 'twas, Gen'ril Hood's corps was on its way there with only Warren and a signal corps man to stop 'em. They went to wavin' signal flags to make the Rebs think the hill was occupied. But who ever heard of the Rebs stoppin' because a place was defended? They kept comin' right along.

"We got our marchin' orders 'bout four-thirty, and we moved to support Sickles, who was in danger."

Amos leaned forward, staring into the red sunset and that hectic July day. John Allen's pipe had gone out and he sat immovable, holding it in his hand. Mary grasped her grandfather's wrist.

"Don't excite yourself, Gramp," she pleaded.

She might just as well not have been there. His old eyes were glowing with battle lust and his usually quavering voice had taken on the timbre of youth.

"First we knew of Little Round Top," he went on, "was when we see Gen'ril Warren come rushin' down. He talked to Gen'ril Weed, wavin' his arms. Then our brigade, under Colonel Vincent, and part of Gen'ril Weed's force moved up the slope.

"We went on the double, guns loaded and bay'nits fixed, and even then we were only just in time. We beat the Rebs to the crest of the hill and went over at 'em. Fired pointblank at each other and I don't think anybody missed. Didn't have time to reload, and we fought with bay'nits. The ground was rotten with rocks and logs and it was every man for himself.

"In hand-to-hand fightin' a man wants to kill everything in front o' him. I 'member my bay'nit sinking into flesh, but I swan I never did see the man I stabbed. Your grandpap was right 'longside o' me and he went down. I straddled him, hacking and stabbin' till he got on his feet.

"Those consarned Rebs were drivin' us back up the hill. I heard cheerin' and afterwards I found out the 140th New York, under Colonel O'Rorke, had reinforced us. O'Rorke was killed as he got to the summit. But I was too busy right then to notice much. My bay'nit broke and I clubbed my rifle. Felt a head give under the butt, like an egg-shell.

"Then a big Reb swam at me. Don't know where he come from. Only, first thing I know, there he was, his eyes and mouth wide open and him yellin' fit to raise the dead. He stabbed straight into me and I felt a shock. I tried to hit back with my gun. But it slipped out o' my hand and the ground started spinnin'. He was comin' at me again.

"'I'm a goner!' I yelled as I was fallin'.

"Then, John, your grandpap stepped past me. I saw him lunge, and the big Reb disappeared. That's all I remember.

"It's all I remember till I woke up in hospital with a hot, shootin' pain over the heart. They told me we'd held Little Round Top and that your grandpap was all right."

His voice trailed off and Mary put her arms about him. Twilight had come and deepened. John Allen tapped his pipe against the porch rail, saying no word. Thunder rumbled and heat lightning slashed the fragrant darkness.

Amos, his mind fixed on Gettysburg as is a Mohammedan pilgrim's on Mecca, went into town to make some purchases for the trip. He would travel light, an old campaigner on the march.

"Who is that old fellow?" asked a salesman of Dan Haskins, proprietor of the Gem Tobacco Store, when Amos departed with some of his favorite plug.

"That," Dan replied, "is Amos Appleby. Old soldier. Civil War veteran. Almost killed at Gettysburg. We're

mighty proud of Amos and the other old vets. There's nothin' too good for our old soldiers."

"That's right," agreed the salesman. "Nothing too good for the old soldiers. They're getting fewer and fewer."

On the morning of the 1st of July, Amos and Mary and John left for the battle-field, and the veterans came down in full force to see them off, looking wistfully after them.

Amos waved good-by with his cane and stood watching the town in which he had been born and in which he had lived his life fading and growing smaller in the distance. It had been home to him these many years. Yet he had a sense he was leaving a strange place as he entered the train.

Mary, excited by the journey, was chiding her grinning husband for taking it so calmly.

"You'd think we were just going into town," she said, "instead of on our honeymoon."

"Well," he drawled, "we are going into a town, and no honeymoon could make me think more of you."

At which she hugged his arm.

Amos sat unseeing as the train slid smoothly down along the Hudson. He was excited, but he gave no sign of it. Only twice during the long journey did he break his silence. The first time he said: "When I came back from Gettysburg along this very road, the joltin' hurt me a little."

And the second remark followed a long study of young John Allen.

"John," he asserted, "you're as like your grandpap as two peas in a pod. Sometimes I get you mixed up in my mind, though I know he's dead a right smart while now."

"Why, he's nothing like him, Gramp," protested Mary. "John's granddad was a much older man."

Amos laughed at her with her husband, but he realized how lonesome he was for John Allen, his life comrade. He wished they were together on this trip. John would get a lot of pleasure out of coming back, and his own would be increased by having John with him. He felt as if he were with him, and so strong was this

feeling that he thought the boy was old John.

The wheels clicking against the rails had been beating insistently under his consciousness. Now they forced themselves upon his attention. They were drumming out a rhythm, and he tensed as he pieced out the words of the tuneless song they were singing:

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming
of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes
of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible
swift sword;
His truth is marching on."

They had arrived at Gettysburg.

Amos Appleby rose early the next morning with the feeling that the day before him was that Day of Days interred in the past now for sixty years. As he swung his old legs to the floor, he found himself half listening for reveille. He dressed meticulously as for inspection, and he marched to the dining-room, scarcely bearing on his cane.

There he found Mary pale but happy. The long journey had tired her. But she would accompany him and John. The sun would make her well again. They went out to the field in a bus, and Amos, resenting the historically correct but unemotional explanations of the guides, took his granddaughter and her husband apart and conducted the tour himself.

He pointed out where Buford and the First and Eleventh Corps had held the Confederate Army until, badly crippled, they retreated to Cemetery Ridge, under the command of Hancock. He showed them the route over which the valorous Pickett had led his immortal Virginians in their vain charge against the strongly entrenched Union Army.

This very day, he reflected, was another day like July 2, 1863, save for a bank of cumulous clouds to the east. But he noticed the fields of wheat and oats were no more. Instead, there was spread before them the perennial harvest of war, the graves of the soldier dead, laid out in regiments.

At lunchtime he became anxious about Mary. She was listless, and, though she laughed at the concern of her men-folks,

she lay down to rest in her darkened room. John was with his wife and Amos sat on the porch alone. The old soldier gazed up at the historic ridges and the battle-field, and there came upon him the whim to retrace the steps he had taken with his comrades on the day of the battle. He consulted his watch and learned he could rest three hours. So he dozed, thoroughly happy, for the very air was alive with memories. In time John came out to him. Mary was sleeping, and he thought it best not to take her with them on the trip that afternoon.

When Amos crept softly in to look at her, she stirred and smiled in her sleep. She was nothing but a child. Why, only yesterday he had held her in his lap. And now, under her heart, she was bearing a little human being who would carry on his blood; a boy, perhaps, to keep up the tradition of devotion to country. A sudden impulse moved him to kiss her damp forehead and brush his old hands through her hair.

"Good-by, baby," he whispered and did not know he spoke. "Take care o' yourself."

She heard him through her slumber and smiled.

"By, Gramp," she murmured; "I'm so sleepy."

So he came softly away, and, putting the thought of her from him, he went out with John to the battle-field in a hired automobile. It was four o'clock.

"We were right here, Sykes's Corps," he explained to John, as their late automobile kicked up the dust of distance. "And the battle was beginnin' right to the minute. Longstreet's batteries opened, and over yonder he came in battle line, threatenin' the whole left wing. Lord A'mighty, it was a pretty sight to see them comin'. We lay here and watched. See over there?" He swept the air with his cane. "That's the Devil's Den, where the Reb sharpshooters picked off our generals." They gazed at the panorama before them, green, smiling, and only the white of the headstones holding the memory of a great battle.

"And now," continued Amos, "we got the order to move and we started. Come on, John." The young man was swinging along beside him, and a winelike flush

bubbled through Amos's veins, as if he had been drenched with the waters of eternal youth. "Here's the way we come." He pointed out and marched to the cadence of ghostly feet. "See, yonder is Little Round Top." The cane pointed steadily at the rocky hill. "'Twas at this point Gen'ril Warren came runnin' down to us. We halted here while he talked to Gen'ril Weed." Amos stopped and watched men long dead excitedly conversing. The Past was blending with the Present.

"There's the orders." He tried and his voice was strong. "Right, march!" He swung off and up the hill. John Allen, his granddaughter's husband, had become John Allen, his comrade. "Guess we're goin' to catch hell. 'On the double!'" His cane swung to his hip and straightened. The cumulous clouds had become a black bank. Thunder rumbled.

"There's the guns, John. Think they're ours. Look at them Rebs come!"

They had breasted the hill, and John Allen stopped. But Amos Appleby went into a ghostly battle with his cane. Down the slope he trundled, jabbing with his stick. The boy tried to stop him, but he could not fight memories implanted before he was born. The thunder rumbled and lightning flashed. The storm was almost upon them.

Amos fought down the hill. His bayonet sank into the body of a foe he could not see. Now John Allen had fallen and he straddled his body, fighting off the phantom enemy till John found his feet again. The world was covered with battle mist.

Out of the mist there strode a giant Confederate soldier. His mouth and eyes were open and he was yelling the Rebel yell. He stabbed at Amos and the old man felt a shock that was more than a memory. He tried to hit back, and his cane slipped from his hands. The ground began to spin.

"I'm a gonner!" he breathed, and young John Allen caught him in his arms.

"Consarn you, John!" Amos mumbled. "Where you bin these last twenty years? That Reb got me sure this time."

On Round Top, not far away, a giant marine, silhouetted against the lowering sky, blew sad, clear, silvery notes from a shining bugle.

Amos stirred in John Allen's arms. What was that he was sounding—"The Recall"? The notes cut through to him over the cataclysmic roaring in his ears. No. By George, he was playing "Taps." Listen! The sad words rode on the eerie tune:

"Soldier rest,
With the blest,
Where the star gleams afar. All the war
Now will cease;
Safe in peace,
Soldier rest."

What was the boy blowing "Taps" for, there on the battle-field?

Amos heard the thunder of marching feet. Young John Allen thought it was the rumble of the approaching storm. But the old man's glazing eyes picked up the hosts of soldiers striding out of the mist. Continentals and Andy Jackson's boys went past. The mist yielded a blur of blue and gray, and Amos saw his own, the soldiers of the Civil War.

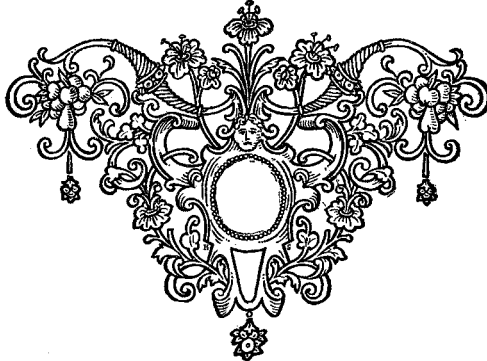
With his ebbing strength he tried to rise and follow them, but his tired old

body held him to the earth. He tugged and wrenched, struggling mightily. Rain whispered from a black and angry sky, then fell on the two in torrents.

The old soldier lay panting on the soaked ground, and suddenly an eager knowledge of an approaching great peace poured in new strength. He slipped easily from the worn shell, huddled there against the wet earth, a militant shade armed with a shadowy gun, accoutred with phantom equipment. His feet trod lightly as they had ever done in his youth at the beginning of a long journey. This one, he knew, would be eternal. Counting, he caught up the susurrated cadence to which his ghostly comrades trudged, and slipped into his place in the spectral line.

Amos Appleby went marching on.

Young John Allen, holding the discarded body in his arms, wondered how he would break the news of Amos's passing to the girl who slept back yonder with the old man's great-grandchild stirring under her heart.



Affirmation

BY JOHN HALL WHEELOCK

I

How little our true majesty is shown
In these proud minds by which we are confessed
Traitors so often, recreants at best—
Unworthy of life's greatness and our own.
Not by the mind we shall be judged alone,
Who are much more than in the mind is guessed.
By faith we live. The heart in every breast
Labors, believing, toward the end unknown.

Through the shrill mind, in terror and defeat,
The ancient flood of holy being roars;
The gallant heart again and yet again—
Jetting fierce streams of faith—with every beat,
In sacramental affirmation, pours
Life's answer through the unbelieving brain.

II

"And yet at last, when all is said and done,
Where is the triumph, truly—to have been
Spectators of an immemorial scene,
And then hurried into oblivion?"
So speaks the mind, self-cheated, while the one
Splendor in every mind, however mean,
Works out Its purpose, secret and serene,
And through all living things under the sun.

His presence is the starry multitude,
And in us also surely He abides:
Our bodies are salt shores for the sharp flood
That through creation rises and subsides
With ebb and flow of everlasting tides
Or rhythms of the perishable blood.

III

Poor timid mind, so agile to defend
Your own misgiving, patient to put out
The light of hope within us and without,
Your own best lover and your own worst friend—
While over us the faithful heavens bend,
While through our veins the justling life-streams shout
Triumph and joy, still pondering the old doubt—
Anxious and unpersuaded to the end!

If it be truth indeed that life through you,
Who are the front of her emergent will,
Waking, asks for an answer and, denied,
Resumes the primal sleep—if this be true,
Dark is the truth. But we are greater still
Than our own thoughts, and wiser than our pride.