

**THE SISTER OF A
CERTAIN SOLDIER**

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The sister of a certain soldier by Stephen J. Maher

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STEPHEN J. MAHER

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STEPHEN J. MAHER

DR. STEPHEN J. MAHER.

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

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CHAPTER I.

"A FADED PROCLAMATION."

It really began on one of the hot rainy afternoons of June, 1916. I don't mean that my acquaintance with the young woman began then. Not at all. She and other members of her family had been occasional patients of mine for several years. But it was on that June afternoon that an innocent question of mine precipitated the strange happenings here narrated. I have had some professional diffidence about telling the things revealed to me by this patient. My Psyche and I have just had a violent dispute on that very point. My Psyche's argument was that the patient would be glad to have the story told, and that for the sake of the public the story ought to be told. Therefore I am going to tell it even at the risk of receiving the condemnation of the captious.

The patient was the rather tall, graceful, soft-spoken, modestly dressed daughter of a prosperous farmer named Morphy in the adjacent town of Stornham. When she was a pay-pupil in the New Haven High School, eight or nine years ago, I had treated her for a slight attack of tonsillitis. After that I followed with some interest her various school successes in scholarship, in singing and on the basket-ball team. She was the class poet. Some of her successes were very remarkable because, in

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one important particular, she differed from the other girls in her class; her blood was largely negro. And the fact was plain to everybody in spite of a skin not darker than that of some South-Europeans, and in spite of her beautiful straight hair.

On this June afternoon that I speak of, she had called because of a soreness of the elbow that had bothered her for a few days. After I had examined her and advised her, I said, as I finished writing her prescription:

"Well, Lucy, now that war with Mexico seems certain and war with Germany probable, are you getting ready to enlist as a nurse, or are you preparing to take your brother's place in the management of the farm as soon as he joins the army?"

The question was put more in banter than seriously, but I didn't realize the dynamic possibilities of that question. The girl's reply came immediately, and with such a display of feeling as I had never before seen her exhibit:

"I am going to do neither. And none of our men folks that I can influence will ever join the United States Army, or the United States Navy. You know my brother. You know what a fine lad he is. You know how I love him and how proud we all are of him. Well, if he attempted to enlist in the army, I would kill him."

"That's a shocking statement," I said, after a moment's hesitation. "I don't like to believe you are in earnest."

"Shocking or not, I mean every word of it."

"A Faded Proclamation."

"What's the explanation? Don't you care whether or not Connecticut meets the fate of Belgium and Servia?"

"It would be a terrible price to pay, but even that price would probably be worth while."

My blood boiled. I arose, handed her her prescription and said, as curtly as I knew how, "I think we'd better not discuss that subject any further."

She smiled bitterly as she took the paper. "That's it, it's always the same. The white man's point of view is always and everlastingly right, because it is his. The colored man's point of view is always and everlastingly wrong because it is his."

"Your point of view," I replied as I walked toward the door, "is neither the white man's nor the colored man's point of view, nor the point of view of any one else outside of Germany or an institution for the criminal insane."

"I believe it to be the point of view of God Almighty. I believe that God has decided that there is no better way of driving the hypocrisy and cruelty out of the American white man's heart,—no other way than by making him suffer pain and humiliation. Up to now he has been so uniformly successful that both he and his wife, particularly his wife, have become impossible to other people."

"You think there is more tenderness in the German than in the American heart?"

"I'm not thinking of the German's heart at all. In his own way and in his own time God will punish

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the German of hard heart. But I know that God has promised repeatedly to punish such tyranny as the white people of America show to the colored folks."

"Don't you think the white Americans have pleased God by freeing the colored folks from slavery, and by doing all the big things that they have done for the training and educating of the colored folk? Is there any country in the world where one class of people has done so much for another class as the white people of America have done for the colored people of America?"

"I admit both of those arguments, but they concern the past. And for the colored folks of this generation neither of those arguments removes the bitterness of the insults and discrimination that they meet every day of their lives, and that are getting worse and more frequent every year, particularly in the North."

"Does anybody insult you? Aren't these insults that you talk about mostly exaggerated hearsay things, or the result of somebody's carrying a chip on his shoulder?"

"The insults are real, and no chip on the shoulder is necessary to provoke them. And—yes, people insult me. I don't want to take up your time telling about my troubles but, Doctor, you are to blame, you began the discussion. I don't often allow myself to grow excited on the subject, but if you really want a peep at an important truth, there it is. But it is only a peep. Anybody insult me? Oh,