

the most dejected feeling. Immediately after the show, the actors start to pack their clothes in huge trunks. The "wardrobe mother" helps them. The props are taken down, and in a very short time are

loaded on trucks along with the trunks. And so the theater is ready for the next show, and the actors are off to a different city. I am sad when I see them leave, for I wish I were going with them.

## Brave Fool

IRVING CROSHIER

"The bravest of fools." That is what my grandmother called him. And that is the description which fitted my uncle best.

All the men in my family, including myself, are fools—people who, because of their antics, are laughed both with and at. Van was perhaps the greatest of the entire family at this. He was always spending his time making people laugh from the day of his birth till, probably, the day of his death.

When he was in grade and high school, his work was always average—except when he liked a subject very much or needed it for some reason. Whenever either of these two incentives occurred, his marks were superior. His teachers were constantly sending notes home, the general theme being, "Van is entirely too cocky and boisterous." Yet even his teachers were forced to laugh at his antics, though back of their hands.

To say the least, a class of his was never dull. At times his questions had even the instructors stumped. Yet there was always that feeling in the teacher's mind that Van had not read his lesson as well as he might. Van very seldom played hookey for his absence was as conspicuous as that of the teacher.

When he graduated, he took every honor he could get from a small school.

On the day of graduation everyone sighed in relief, including Van, at his departure. Another year would have been the school's undoing.

His next stop was Western Reserve, in Cleveland, for in his reckless, clowning manner he had decided to be a doctor. The strange thing was that he succeeded. He went on to become later one of the most successful general practitioners in Ohio.

Perhaps the most decisive factor in his life was Millie. She was the kind-hearted, sensible, quiet counter-balance that Van needed. She encouraged him with his work, made him use his art of foolishness as a valuable asset. She believed, and she taught him to believe, that laughter is the sure cure for worry and self-pity, and, that if they are cured, illness is secondary. He now knew that a higher Power had granted his foolishness to him for a reason.

Never before had the hospital echoed with such joyous laughter as it did when Van called on his patients; never before had there been the warmth of the sunny smiles that followed Van as he left a patient.

The man I remember most vividly was the truck driver we shall call Tom, who was turned into a human torch when his gasoline truck exploded, covering him

with fiery gasoline. There were three specialists on the case besides my uncle. That man was in the most incredible agony. He couldn't move a muscle without excruciating pain. He wanted to die. Yet from the day Van walked in the door, Tom's attitude began to change. Van could not make him laugh, for it would have injured the boy. Yet, by his subdued foolishness Van made Tom grin on the inside, if that is possible. Tom told us about it later. He said that the only bright spot was when Doc Van came to see him.

Millie even started to teach Van to economize. He got to the place where he could start the day with ten dollars in his pocket and come home with two. For Van, that was an accomplishment.

On the third day after their fifth wedding anniversary, Millie died from a heart attack. At the funeral, Van was like the sun on a rainy day, trying valiantly to smile on a world overcast by clouds.

After her death, Van put everything he had into his work. He was hurt deep inside, but on the outside he was still the foolish yet reliable doctor. That is what Millie had wanted.

One day in February of 1942 we received a letter from Cleveland saying that Uncle Van was going to New York on business. That was the last time we heard from him in the United States.

The next word we got was from the city, or village, of Vagan in the Philip-

pinas. The letter was signed by Lieutenant Van Croshier, U. S. N. R. He was a Navy doctor assigned to the Fifth Marine Battalion.

I also got a letter from the Marine Sergeant who acted as Van's assistant. Pete Sloan (the sergeant) told of how Van was continually keeping the men in stitches, both figuratively and literally. Pete wrote that Van was one of the most respected and well-known medics in that district. Even the Jap prisoners asked about "Doc Crow."

That was the last letter we ever received from either of them. In June of 1942, my grandmother received a letter from the Secretary of the Navy and a Purple Heart medal. "Died in the service of his country," the letter read.

Finally, in 1943, we were visited by Sergeant Sloan. He told us of his escape from the island fortress of Corregidor. Then he told us of the death of "the Doc." It was the night of a Jap attack through the line. "The Doc" was missing. The next day Pete found him hanging from a tree, completely slashed by bayonet and saber. Pete told us that even then there seemed to be a flicker of a smile on his torn face.

I know that there are thousands of men killed every day on the battle field. Perhaps it is a form of egotism that prompts me to write about this one man, my uncle, yet to me he is and always will be the bravest fool in the world.