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LOVE'S TRIUMPH.

A STORY OF LOVE AND WAR.

BY MARY J. HOLMES,

Author of "Lena Rivers," "Edna Browning,"
"Tempest and Sunshine," Etc., Etc.

"Oh, don't, Annie, don't talk of death to Jimmie!" Rose cried with a shudder. "You can't begin to guess how it makes me feel, or how terrible it would seem if either he or Tom should die."

"Can't I?" Annie asked, with such a depth of mournful pathos, that Rose's tears flowed at once.

Of course Annie knew how it felt, and every fibre of her heart was bleeding now, as she remembered one who left her as full of life and hope as either Tom or Jimmie, but who came back no more, save as the dead come back, shrouded and confined for the grave. But Annie would not give way to her own feelings there. She would comfort Rose, and encourage the young man, who, she felt, shrank from the perils spread out before him. So she told how few there were, comparatively, who died on the battle-field, while the chances for life in the hospitals were greater now than better care and skill had been procured.

"Annie—excuse me, Mrs. Graham," and Jimmie spoke vehemently, while his eyes kindled with a strange gleam. "Why don't you go as a nurse? You might be the means of untold good to the poor fellows who need such care as you could give them."

"I have thought of it," said Annie, while Rose exclaimed:

"You turn hospital nurse—ridiculous! You never shall so long as I can prevent it. Shall she, Tom?" And she appealed to the latter, who had just come in. "Shall Annie go into those horrid hospitals?"

"I am not Mrs. Graham's keeper," Tom replied, "but I should be sorry to see her acting in the capacity of hospital nurse, even though I know that some of our noblest, best women are engaged in that work."

"Yes, old chap," and Jimmie laughed a merry laugh. "It's mighty easy talking that way now, but suppose you, Captain Carleton, are some day among the terribly wounded, thigh shot through, arm splintered above the elbow, jaw-bone broken, and all that, wouldn't the pain be easier to bear if the nurse should happen to be Mrs. Graham, or somebody just like her?"

"Undoubtedly it would," Tom answered. "Still I should be sorry to have her there amid the sickening horrors."

"Please stop, I can't bear to hear about it," Rose exclaimed. "I know it would be nice to be a Florence Nightingale, and Annie would make a splendid one, but I'll never let her go anywhere, or Jimmie, or Will is wounded, and then we'll come together, won't we, Annie?"

There was no response from Annie, until Jimmie said:

"Say, Mrs. Graham, if I am ever wounded, and you hear I am suffering in some dismal hole, will you come and care for me?"

He did not join Will's or Tom's name with his own. It was "Jimmie Carleton" whom Annie was to nurse. But it did not matter. Lifting up her head, so that her soft, blue eyes looked into his, Annie answered, unhesitatingly:

"Providence permitting, I will, and I would do the same for any brave fellow who follows, as my husband did, where duty to his country leads."

"So you see, you will take no better than I, after all," Tom laughingly rejoined, while Jimmie thought within himself:

"Why need she always bring that husband in? It's bad enough to know she's had one, without eternally hearing about him."

Foolish Jimmie. It was folly for him to be awake so long as he did that night, or to dream when at last he slept, of hospital walls expanding into a palace as an angel form with hair and eyes like Annie's bent over his feverish pillow, while soft, white hands dressed some gaping wound where the enemy's bullet had been. Sheer folly, too, was it for "dignified old Tom" to watch from his window the young moon, until it set in the western sky, thinking of Mary, as he tried to make himself believe, wondering why it was that Annie reminded him so much of her, and why he should be so deeply interested in one who, until a few weeks past, had been to him a stranger. To Annie, Captain Carleton and Jimmie were nothing more than friends, and if, during the week preceding their departure, she was quite as busy as Rose, and apparently as much interested in the various preparations for their comfort, it was only because they were soldiers, and not, as Widow Simms once suggested to Susan, "because they were Carletons and handsome and rich and—and, well, there's no tellin' what will happen when a widder young and handsome, and my man's been dead this thirteen years! Nobody need tell me she'd be so busy for anybody but them Carletons."

It was the Capt. Carleton's mind, but that sassy-faced Jeems. Ugh! and in her ire at Annie's supposed preference for sassy-faced Jeems, the widow spilled more than half the spiced chocolate she was carrying to Isaac.

Never was the widow more mistaken. Annie Graham would have done for Eli, John and Isaac Simms, or possibly William Baker, the same offices she was doing for "the Carletons," and her voice would have been just as sweet and hopeful when she bade them fare-well, as it was that bright spring morning, when, in the parlor of the Mather mansion, Tom and Jimmie were waiting to say good-bye.

At the very last moment Bill Baker had announced his intention of going, too.

"Thirteen dollars a month and dog's fare was better than taylor's round hum," he said, "and livin' on the old gal, who was gittin' most too straight and blue for his notions. Besides that, he felt kinder 'tached to the corporal, and wanted to be where he could see him and wait on him like any other nigger."

Jimmie would gladly have dispensed with such a singular attaché, but Bill could not be shaken off, and as he did in various ways evince a strong regard for his former captive, Jimmie was forced to submit to what he termed "his thorn in the flesh," giving from his own purse money for Billy's outfit, and furnishing the mother with means to repair her dwelling and make it far more comfortable than at present. This he was sure pleased Annie, and no sacrifice was too costly if it won her regard. She had prayed for him, he knew, for Rose had told him so, and prayers like hers, though they did not avail to save her George's life, would surely shield him from danger. He should come back again when the war was over—come back to find an older grave by Rockland's churchyard gate, while the wife, who daily watered that grave with tears, would be as young, as beautiful, and far more girlish-looking than now, when, in her widow's weeds, she offered him her hand at parting, bidding good-bye to him and the noble Tom, who stood beside him.

There were tears, and kisses, and blessings from Rose and her mother, a few low-spoken words of sympathy and good-will from Annie, and then the two young men were gone.

Half an hour later and the eastern train thundered through the town, bearing away to the fields of bloody carnage, three more young, vigorous lives, and leaving desolate two homes, one the lonely cottage where Bill's mother wept alone, the other the Mather mansion, where Mrs. Carleton and Rose sobbed bitterly, while Annie strove in various ways to comfort them.

CHAPTER XX.

It was very lonely at the Mather mansion after the departure of the soldiers, and it required all Annie's tact to keep Rose from sinking entirely under the sense of desolation which crept over her as she began more and more to realize what the war meant, and to tremble for the safety of her husband and her brothers. They were still in Washington, but they might be ordered to advance at any moment; and, in a tremor of distress, Rose waited and watched for every mail which could bring her tidings of them. Next to her husband's life, the most costly of her life, the most costly for Jimmie had in his nature a world of hopefulness and humor; and his letters were full of fun, and quaint description of the life he was leading.

And still of the three young men—Will Mather, Tom Carleton and Jimmie—the latter suffered the most acutely, for in addition to his dislike of military life, he was compelled to endure the jokes and jeers which the coarser and more unfeeling of his comrades heaped upon him when, from Bill Baker, he heard that his first experiences in arms had been the most acutely of the army of the enemy. To one of Bill's lieutenants it seemed a great thing that he had captured and brought to Washington so illustrious a prisoner as the "corporal," as he persisted in calling him, and the story was repeated with such wonderful additions, that Jimmie, when once by accident he was a listener to the tale, failed utterly to recognize himself in the "chap who had run so many miles

from, and then fought so many hours with the redoubtable Bill," who, while annoying his quondam captive so terribly, still, under all circumstances, evinced for him an attachment as singular as it was sincere. Everything which he would do for Jimmie he did, becoming literally his servant and drudge, and thus saving him from many a hardship which, as a private, he would otherwise have encountered. It was a fancy of Jimmie's that, by serving as a private in the army, and seeing which his hand had once been lifted, he should in some way expiate his sin, and, perhaps, be surer of winning favor from Annie Graham, whose blue eyes were constantly before him, just as they had looked when, in her dress of black, she stood in the spring sunshine bidding him good-bye. Soon after his arrival in Washington, he had been offered a second lieutenantcy in Captain Carleton's company, but he steadily declined the offer, giving no explanation to any one except his brother and his sister Rose, to whom he wrote:

"Perhaps I was foolish to decline the offer, and for a moment I was horribly tempted to accept it, especially when, by doing so, I could to some degree escape my 'thorn in the flesh,' who, notwithstanding that he does me many a kindness, annoys me so excessively. But I could not feel that I deserved the post. It ought to belong to some one who had never spurned the Old Flag, and so I stood firm, and suggested as a substitute that other Simms chap from Rockland, Hopbail, or Phalaris, or Eli—changed it I know what his name is. Any way, he is that crabbed widow's son, that used to pucker her mouth so when she saw that young reb of a Carleton, and snatch away her gown for fear it would hit me. I reckon he'll get the office with its twelve hundred a year, which he can use for his mother's support. One of her sons, you know, is married, and as good as lost to her; while that boy Isaac is not long for this world. Prison life at Richmond did the business for him, or I'm mistaken; so let Eli be lieutenant, and James Carleton only a private. Do you think I did right, and will that paragon of yours, Mistress Graham, think so, too?"

That was what Jimmie wrote to Rose after he had been gone three or four weeks, and what Rose, with her usual impetuous thoughtlessness, read to her mother and Annie, which he can use for his mother's support. One of her sons, you know, is married, and as good as lost to her; while that boy Isaac is not long for this world. Prison life at Richmond did the business for him, or I'm mistaken; so let Eli be lieutenant, and James Carleton only a private. Do you think I did right, and will that paragon of yours, Mistress Graham, think so, too?"

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"What did he call me?" Annie exclaimed, when she learned very white, as she leaned toward Rose, who, startled at her vehemence, tried again to make out the word, which was strangely distorted, from the fact that just as Jimmie was writing it his shadow, Bill, had struck him familiarly upon the shoulder, saying, with a laugh:

"Write to your gal, I s'pose? Give her Bill Baker's regards." "It looks like Pequot, and some like Patagonian, Rose said, deciding at last that it was paragon, and adding by way of an explanation to herself of Annie's evident surprise, "You did not like the sound of his calling you a Pequot, did you, Annie. It wouldn't have meant anything if he had, and it was natural that I should make the blunder, for that's the name he gave the young gal at the Pequot House—the one he liked, and to whom he passed himself off as Dick Lee. You remember I told you about her?"

"Yes, I remember," and Annie's voice was a little husky—"the little girl who was not happy with her aunt, and so, listened the money willingly to the boy's kind winning words." Annie did not know why she said that—unless it were wrong from her by some sudden and bitter memory of what had been a bright sun-spot in her cheerless childhood. When the Pequot girl was mentioned in her presence once, she had gathered that it was mostly Mrs. Carleton's pride which had taken the boy away from any more rambles on the beach or moonlight saunters upon the bay, and perhaps it was a desire to defend and excuse the girl which prompted her to advance a reason why Dick Lee's attentions had been so acceptable. She would have given much to recall her words, which made Mrs. Carleton dart a quick, curious glance at her, while Rose exclaimed: "How do you know she was not happy with her aunt? Did Jimmie ever tell you about her?"

To be Continued.

Extraction.

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There was a gloomy life. Anybody could see that their gaiety was affected.—Detroit Journal.

All the true religions of the world are forms of the prayer, "Search me, and know my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—Ruskin.

Intend; no snare like folly; no tyrant like greed.

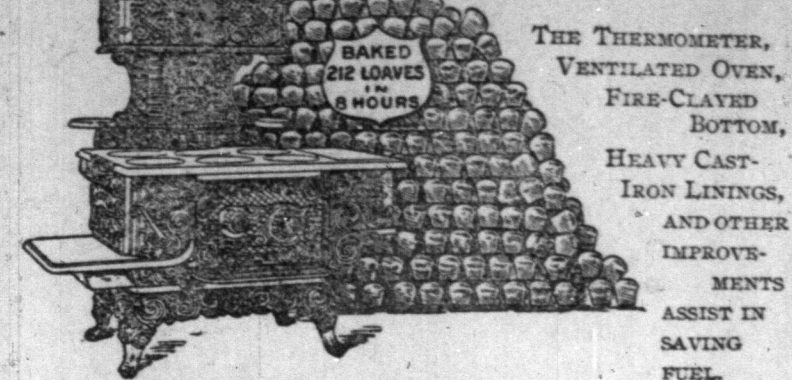
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