

though she foresaw that duty could never be an easy matter.

"And if I shouldn't come out of it, you won't be ashamed to remember me, will you?"

"Don't, Jack."

"You haven't told me what you would say to the defeated man who came to you?"

Clear and firm came her words:

"I should say, 'Thank God,' Jack."

For a moment they clung together in a deeper joy than their happy betrothal had known. Then, there had been southern moonlight and the mocking-bird's song. To-day, the chill south-east wind drove the rain against the window.

With all the greater intentness they held to those few minutes' respite from the waiting shadow of war and death.

It was Millie who first yielded to the claim of the present and drew herself from that dear grasp.

"Please let me go now," she said, "I must get home before uncle does, or how shall I account for being out in the storm? It would be dreadful if he ever knew that I came here to Adeline."

Jack gave no sign of loosening his hold and his air was pugnacious as he asked:

"Surely he isn't unkind to you?" then with sudden inspiration, "Millie, if you aren't happy with him, let us go now and find someone to marry us, and I can leave you with Adeline and Mrs. Singleton."

The thrilling possibility set Millie half laughing, half crying.

"Don't be absurd, Jack," she protested. "Uncle's an old dear, and it's only that I couldn't bear to hurt him as it would if he guessed that I hadn't been true to him. And oh Jack," in a whisper, "that—the other—wouldn't be right, would it?"

The momentary light faded from his face.

"It wouldn't be right to take you from a comfortable home now, when the worst is yet to come," he agreed. "And so, Millie, it must be good-by? I mustn't even walk through the storm beside you?"

"No," Millie answered with a sob.

"Well, at any rate I have something now to warm my heart in night watches. I used to try to keep from seeing your face, but it would always come back. Now, I can welcome it."

As he spoke he was fastening her waterproof with gentle fingers. He would say no word to detain her and make the parting worse. But on the repressed pain of his face came a new gleam of purpose.

"You are going to the ball at Government House to-night?" he asked.

"I suppose so," she answered listlessly, "but you'll be gone?"

There was both hope and fear in the question.

"That depends. We may not. If any of our men do go there I shall try to be one. At any rate keep the third and fourth dances free."

Millie's face reflected the hopefulness of his, though she protested:

"Where's the use? I couldn't be seen dancing with you, you know."

"Oh, we'll get Addie to manage somehow. Perhaps she can take me to you in the garden. At any rate, keep those two dances free. The third and fourth. You'll remember. And now, child, go."

He loosened his arms, and Millie went forth alone into the storm, while he remained behind.

They had both forgotten all about poor Adeline waiting patiently in her bedroom.

Millie felt herself a mixture of hypocrite and traitor when she had to face her uncle at that day's early dinner.

All private scruples were however swept away in a great wave of dismay at his exultant announcement:

"The Governor and Admiral are likely to have a finer picnic to-morrow than they had yesterday. They can take a sail out for three miles to-morrow morning and pick up the pieces of the Onondaga after she has met the Vermont and Connecticut. They'd have done their friends better service if they had listened to me, and sent her packing yesterday. Now, our ships are off the harbour and she can't escape them. A pilot spoke one of them this morning and came in with the news. The whole town is astir with it, and will make a circus out of this naval fight that's got to come off. Dancing on a volcano—who was it said that? These rebels will learn what it means by to-morrow."

As he talked Millie sat staring at him in speechless misery.

He paused, rubbing his hands in his habitual fashion.

She could not help it. Her self-control was gone. "Oh, uncle, don't. Think of all those lives!" she gasped, and broke out crying.

Never was man more aghast than the Judge. He had got into the way of looking to Millie for a chorus to all his expressions of feeling, and this exhibition of feminine weakness took him completely aback.

With rueful remembrance of the fine hysterical attacks to which his late wife had treated him, he decided that even Millie could not be always counted on as superior to her sex.

All the same, it was in a wistful tone that he said: "Perhaps you're right, child. This war has brought the savage to the surface in all of us. Only remember," and his voice was again crisp and clear, "the sharpest remedies may be the most merciful in the end."

Millie had pulled herself together and answered: "Oh, I never meant to blame you, uncle. Indeed, I know you would give your life to stop this war, if you could."

"God knows I would, child."

"You mustn't mind me," she said. "One can't help getting worked up over it all, you know."

"Yes, I know," he agreed with a sigh.

"And now what about this ball to-night? Do you want to go?"

Millie's heart sank at this hint of uncertainty. Judge Fawcett was so punctilious in his attendance on all official ceremonies that she had never doubted his going.

"Just as you like," she murmured, and her uncle announced that he had decided to stay at home himself, but that she might run in and ask their neighbour, Mrs. Warden, to take her.

Veiling her relief, Millie checked the quick thought that with that fat, short-sighted chaperon she would enjoy more liberty than under her uncle's eye.

The rooms of the old colonial Government House furnished a brave show of uniforms that night.

"I am glad that our northern star has not failed us," said the painted and tightly-laced General as Millie made her uncle's excuses.

As they passed on, Millie's eyes swept the various bright groups in restless search.

She noted one thing that vaguely surprised her. Captain Palliser was amongst the men already gathered round Adeline Lester and she saw him write his name on her card, bow and turn away.

A moment later he had joined her and was demanding his dances.

"They're playing the first now, and I have taken the second. I see three and four are marked," he added with a peculiar look in his eyes. It was now that she noticed a suppressed intensity, widely different from his usual coolness.

"Yes," she answered, startled, then seizing the first topic that came:

"I saw you getting a dance from Miss Lester. I didn't know you knew her."

As she spoke she realised that her words sounded like the pique of rivalry.

It did not matter with Captain Palliser of course; he was so comfortably middle-aged in her view, but why did he look at her so strangely?

"I had not that honour," he answered, "but Colonel Caldegate was sent like a retriever to fetch me. My charms have evidently impressed the lady."

"Isn't she sweet?" Millie demanded.

"Delightful!" was the dry response.

"Are you going to dance with her?" she went on with a vague feeling that she was putting her foot in it.

"Yes. She has given me number four—one of those you have reserved," he said, significantly, and Millie's heart beat faster with remembrance of Carter's words, "Addie will manage it."

But other partners had found her out and the next few minutes were occupied with her programme.

At another time her girlish vanity might have been stirred by the eagerness to secure dances, and by the protests over those reserved ones. Now she wished impatiently that she could be left to watch Adeline holding her court at the other end of the drawing-room.

Never had her friend looked better than in her green tulle ball-dress, but was it only Millie's fancy that she had an air of restless nervousness?

All semblance of rivalry was sustained, but there was a swift interchanged glance and smile that warmed the heart of each girl more than all her little triumph.

(TO BE CONTINUED)