

LOVE AND DUTY.

It was a military ball, the farewell ball of the officers of the shire Buffs, previous to their starting for the Sudan.

Still in this brightly lighted ball-room there crept somehow a vague, mysterious feeling of depression, for it was the farewell ball of the officers and "farewell" is ever a nasty word to say.

But under the gayety of the scene there ran an undefined but unmistakable current of something very much akin to anxiety.

"Oh, no—nothing. But if it did I, Oh, I tell you, Will, I believe I should die." The cold voice was very pleading now.

"If in your heart a corner lies That has no place for me, You do not love me as I deem."

"Will, tell me—tell me once more—before we go in," and her voice was nothing but a whisper.

"The rest of the sentence was stifled—by one or the other, or both. But Billy heard it."

Four months later the little British force in the Sudan was forming a square, for the enemy was about to charge.

"Ah, but, dear old boy, men never know what women feel! With you it will be different; you will always have something to do—camp life, the excitement and all that—"

"I won't fight, honor bright," interrupted Billy, very earnestly. And if ever a man has said these words sincerely, Billy did at that time.

"N—no. I'm not afraid of that. I might forgive even that—if you told me all about it. All, mind. Ah, but, Will, dear, men do sometimes forget, don't they?"

"N—no," said Billy, emphatically. "And the months will pass wearily by, and I shall dream—and dream—and I know those dreams will be nightmares."

"Oh, n—nothing. But if it did I, Oh, I tell you, Will, I believe I should die." The cold voice was very pleading now.

"Yes?" "At any rate, Will, you—you'll write every day, won't you?"

"On, come now! How can I? The Sudan postal arrangements are not yet controlled by St. Mark's-Grand, you know."

"The strains of the last waltz came humming through the trees. They knew it well. The waiting music brought home to each the words of the old song—"

"If in your heart a corner lies That has no place for me, You do not love me as I deem."

"Come, let's dance it," suggested Billy. They rose. Billy looked down at the uplifted face. It was as pale as the face of a dead maiden.

"Why?" And he looked it between his hands, and an obtrusive Chinese lantern very thoughtfully went out.

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movement, giving his orders clearly and quietly—orders which were obeyed as quickly as they were given.

"Back—back into the square, for your lives!" he ordered. The passage was clear, except for wounded Arabs, and with a rush the men turned.

"Hold up, Ross, old boy! Why, what's the matter? You're all right now. What's up?"

"Look out, old man," he murmured. "Get back—leave me. I'm done—no good. Get back—there's—just—time."

"I'll come back, darling, never fear," he whispered. "Go; there's just time, Fortescue. Run—for your life. God bless you—leave me—quick!"

"I'm coming, dearest. I'm coming to you—Vi. Don't cry, darling—I'm—oom—ing—home."

"Save yourself—there's—just—time—good-by."

It is no discredit to Billy to say that there was a second's pause before he threw away his useless revolver and gripped his sword more tightly and said through his clenched teeth: "No, old chap! I'll stay!"

A rescue was soon effected from the square, but not before Billy was lying with his face upward to the African sun, a spear through his lungs and each beat of his brave heart increasing the crimson stain upon the sand.

They brought him into the square and did what they could. But he only spoke once more, and the poor dying whisper was heard only by one or two who bent over him.

"Tell her I did mean to come— but poor—old Jimmy—was down. Tell her—"

The last words were whispered to some one who was also near him, who was standing over him and holding the hot, curly head over her knees, though only Billy saw her.

"I'm—coming, dearest. I'm coming to you—Vi. Don't cry, darling—I'm—oom—ing—home."

Miss Oheriton, the "desperate girl," the belle of the country, is still unmarried. Into her golden hair have crept threads of silver; the fair face has lost a little of its smooth radiance.

People wonder "how on earth she spends her time." They forget to ask the poor around her, the sick, the despairing, those whose husbands are far away; widows whose husbands are dead.

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