

John McConnell

GOLDEN STAR
SATURDAY,
JUNE 30, 1906.

From 7 o'clock Saturday morning till 11.30 in the evening. Special sale at McConnell's.

Prunes, 5c. per lb.
Good Ginger Snaps, 5c. per lb.
Strawberry Cakes, 3 lbs. for 25c.
Lemon Biscuits, 3 lbs. for 25c.
5-lb. pails Jam, for 38c.
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Pickles, 10c. per bottle.
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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.

"Come closer to me," he said; "take my hand in yours, and keep it there while I thank you for what you've been to me. You'll forgive me, I know, that I ever thought you proud, for I did, and sometimes there was a bitter feeling in my heart when I saw you. Rose surrounded with every luxury, and thought of Annie as highly educated as she, taking a far lower place in Rockland, because her husband was a mechanic. There is more of that feeling among the working classes than you imagine, and you don't know how much good a familiar word or a little notice from such as you does to those who fill the humbler walks of life. You feel this more than men, and again I thank you for the care promised my Annie. I do not ask that you should take her to your home as you should, but see that she does not want; see that no winter night shall find her hungry, no winter morning cold. Oh, Annie, Annie, that you should ever come to this!"

It was a bitter, wailing cry, embodying all the mighty love the sick man had ever felt for his young wife. George had thought himself resigned, but weak human nature, which clings tenaciously to life, was making one last effort for the mastery, and the worn spirit fainted for a time in the fierce struggle which ensued. The mind began to wander, and was in fancy back again to the cottage in the Hollow, where the soldier, clasping his Annie to his bosom, begged of her in piteous tones not to love him less because he was a cripple. "I have only one arm to work with now, but I won't let you starve, for when there's but one crust left, I'll give it all to you, and laugh as merrily that you will never guess how the hunger pain is gnawing at my heart. I've felt it once, my darling. I know just what it's like. 'Twas on that terrible day when our brave boys met the foe 'way up there at Manassas. There were hours and hours, and hours, when we neither ate nor drank, and the July sun poured down so hotly, drying the perspiration which dropped from my hair like rain. 'Twas my very life I sweat away that awful day, fighting for the Union. Did you hear the battle, Annie?—hear the cannon's bellowing thunder as it echoed through the Virginia woods? Wasn't it grand, the yell the Highlanders gave, as, with the 69th, they bore down battery after battery, and plunged into the enemy's midst? How brave our company played their part, fighting their way through shot and shell, and blood and brains, wading ankle-deep in human mire. Hurrah for the Stars and Stripes, my boys! Three cheers for the Federal flag! No give us three times three; and when it floats again over all the land, remember the soldiers who helped defend it. Hurrah, hurrah!"

Mr. Mather shuddered as the wild shout rang through the room. It seemed so like mockery, that dying man, soldier shouting for liberty, and trying in vain to wave aloft his poor, scarred stump. Anon, however, the patriotic mood was changed, and the voice was very and which whispered: "But look! what sounds are these, mingling in the glad notes of victory? 'Tis the widow, the orphan, the mother, weeping over the slain! There's mourning, East and West; there's weeping North and South, for the dead who will return no more! A crushed rebellion is hardly worth the fearful price. Oh, Annie, pray for the poor soldier, everybody pray. Honor our memory, forget our faults, speak kindly of us when we are gone. We gave our life for freedom! 'Tis all that we can do. Speak kindly of the soldiers, Annie. Reason was struggling back again; and, bending lower, Mr. Mather said: "George, we will honor the soldiers' dead, and care for the soldiers' living. 'Yes, yes!' George answered faintly. 'They need it so much, more than the people guess who stay at home and read about the war. It will be long, and the contest terrible. The North is strong, and the South determined, and both will fight like fiends. But right must conquer at last, and the Star Spangled Banner shall wave again even over misguided Charleston, whose sons and daughters shall weep for joy as they greet the joyful sight. God speed the happy day!'"

Mr. Mather could only press the hand which lay again in his. He could not speak, for he knew there was a third presence now in the sick-room, that its dark form was shading the bed where he sat, and with that feeling of awe death always inspires, he sat silently watching its progress, and thinking, it may be, of the future time when William Mather would be the dying one instead of George Graham. Slowly the marble pallor and the strange chill crept on, pinching the nose, contracting the lips, touching the forehead and moistening the soft brown hair which William smoothed caressingly, as he bent down to catch the last faint whisperings of a spirit nearly gone.

"We fought the battle bravely. Tell them not to be discouraged because of one defeat. Our cause is just. 'Till triumph at the last. Don't be too bitter toward the South; there are kind hearts there as well as here, and its daughters weep as sadly as any at the North. God help and pity them, Annie, darling, I am almost home, so near that I can see the pearly gates which stand open night and day. It is not hard to die, no pain, no anguish now, nothing but joy and gladness and everlasting rest, rest, perfect rest for the redeemed."

Directly the November wind went sweeping down the street, and the mingling rain beat against the window, whilst the misty daylight came struggling faintly into the silent room which held the living and the dead; the one cold and white, and still, his features wearing a smile of peace, as if he had indeed entered into everlasting rest, the other kneeling by his side, and with his face buried in the pillows, praying that when his time should come, he, too, might die the death of the righteous, and go where George had gone.

CHAPTER XIV.

With quivering lips Mr. Mather told the members of Company R that their lieutenant was dead; and strong men as they were they did not deem themselves unmanly that they wiped the big tears away, and crowding around their informant anxiously asked for particulars of their departed comrade, all speaking kindly of him, and each thinking of the sweet girl-wife at home, from whom the news would fall so crushingly. A soldier's dying was no novel thing in Washington, and so, aside from Company R, there were few who knew or cared that another soul had gone to the God who gave it,—that another victim was added to the list which shall one day come up with fearful blackness before the provokers of the war. The drums beat just the same,—the bands played just the same,—and the busy tide went on as if the quiet chamber in the street, held so stifled form, once as full of life and hope as the gay troops marching by.

But away to the Northland there was bitter mourning, and many a bright eye wept as the sad news ran along the streets that Rockland's young lieutenant, of whom the people were justly proud, lay dead in Washington, and many a heart beat with sympathy for the young wife who ever since hearing the fatal news, had lain upon her bed, more dead than alive, with a look upon her white face which told better than words of the anguish she was enduring.

Nothing could induce Rose to leave her for a moment. Will had stayed by George, she said, "and she should stay by Annie."

With her sitting by, Annie grew stronger, and could at last talk calmly of what was expected on the morrow. "It will be terrible," she said, "to hear the tramp of feet coming up the walk, and know they are bringing George home. Oh, Mrs. Mather, you'll stay by me, won't you, even if your husband is among the number?"

Annie did not mean to be selfish. She was too much humbled to realize anything fully, and she never thought of what it would cost Rose to stay there, knowing her husband would seek her at home, and be so disappointed at not finding her there. Rose could not refuse a request so touchingly made, but just as the morning broke she went with Will for a few moments to the depot, where the necessary preparations were made for Will's comfort; then, penning him a note to tell why she was not there to meet him, she returned again to the cottage, where Widow Simms was busied at worst setting things to rights, and the expected arrival, her tears falling upon the furniture she was dusting, and her chest heaving with sobs as she heard in the distance the sound of a gathering crowd, and thought: "It may be my boy they'll go up next to meet."

Poor Annie, too, shuddered and moaned, as she caught the ominous sounds, and knew what they portended.

It would be better to bring him back quietly, she said. It seems almost like mockery this parade, which he can never know. I may be glad by-and-by that they honored him thus, but it's so hard now, and covering her head with her pillow, Annie wept silently as she heard the mournful beat of the muffled drum, and knew the march to the depot had commenced.

How Rose wanted to be in the street and see her husband when he came; but with heroic self-denial she forced down every longing to be away, and, sitting down by a window, busied herself with counting off the minutes and wondering of the clock would ever point to half-past ten, or the train ever arrive.

There was a great crowd out that morning to meet the returning soldier, and George's dream of what might be when he came back again was more than realized. There were men and carriages upon the street, and groups of

women at the corners, while the little boys ran up and down. But in the heat of the muffled drum there was a tone which made the hearts of those who heard it overflow with tears, as they remembered what that dirge-like music meant. Around the jammed white hat of the man who played the fife there was a badge of mourning, and in the notes he trilled a mournful cadence far different from the patriotic strains he played as a farewell to Rockland soldiers going forth to battle, with hopes so sanguine of success. One of that youthful band was coming back—not full of life and fiery ambition as when he went away, dreaming bright dreams of the glory he would win and the laurels he would wear when once again he trod the streets at home. Not as a conquering hero, with the crown of fame on his brow, though the crown indeed was won; and where the golden light of heaven shines from the everlasting hills, he was wearing it in glory. But his ear was deaf to all earthly music, and the tribute of respect his friends vain would bestow upon him, awakened no thrill in his cold, pulseless heart. Still they felt that all honor was due to the dead, and so they had come up to meet him, a greater throng than any of which he had dreamed when ambition burned within his bosom. There was a carriage waiting, too, just as he hoped there might be; a carriage sent expressly for him, but the children on the sidewalk shrunk away and ceased their noisy clamor as it went by, its sombre appearance somewhat relieved by the gay coloring of the Stars and Stripes laid reverently upon it.

Slowly up the street the long procession passed, unimpeded by the rain which, mingled with the snow and sleet, beat upon the pavements, and dashed against the window-panes, from which many a tear-stained face looked out upon the gloomy scene, made ten times gloomier by the sighing of the wind and the rifts of leaden clouds veiling the November sky. Over the eastern hills there was a rising wreath of smoke, and a shrill, discordant scream told that the train was coming, just as the carriage sent for George drew up to its appointed place.

Gently, carefully, tenderly they lifted him out, and set him down in their midst; but no loud cheering rent the air, no exclamations of applause, nothing save that dreadful muffled beat, and the soft notes of the fife, falling to the passengers leaning from the windows that the dead as well as the living had been their fellow-traveller. The banner upon the hearse told the rest of the story, and with a sigh to the memory of the gallant soldier, the passengers drew up to their seats, and the train sped on its way, leaving the Rockland people alone with their dead.

Reverently they placed him in the carriage which none cared to share with him. Carefully they wrapped around him the Stars and Stripes, and, dropping the heavy curtains, followed through the streets to the cottage in the Hollow, which he had left so full of life and hope. Around that cottage there was a gathered multitude next day, and though on the unsheltered eaves of those without the driving rain was falling, they waited patiently while the prayer was said, and the funeral anthem chanted. Then there came a bustling moment,—people passing beneath the Star Spangled Banner, and pausing to look at the dead. There were sobs and tears, and words of fond regret, and then the coffin-lid was closed, and once more that muffled beat was heard, as with arms reversed the Rockland Guards marched up the walk, where, leaning upon their guns, they stood, while strong men carried out their late companion, and placed him in the hearse, the carriage sent for him. There was no relative to go with him to the grave,—none in whose veins his blood was flowing, so Mr. Mather and Rose took the lead, followed by a promiscuous crowd of carriages and pedestrians, the very horses heaping time to the solemn music beaten by the drum and played by the man in the jammed white hat.

Slowly through the November rain,—through the November sleet they bore him on through the streets which he so oft had trodden; on past the cottage he meant to buy for poor Annie, whispering to herself with every note of the tolling bell, "George has gone to heaven." Onward, still onward, till streets and cottages were left behind, and they came to where the marble columns, gleaming through the autumnal fog, told who peopled that silent yard. Just by the gate, the bearers paused, and stood with uncovered heads while the solemn words were uttered, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Then, when it was all over, the long procession moved through the spacious churchyard, past the tall monuments betokening worldly wealth; past the less imposing stones, whose lettering told of treasure in heaven; past the group of cedar trees and pine; past the graves of the nameless dead, and so out upon the highway, Rose Mather starting in alarm as the band struck up a quicker, merrier march, whose stirring, jubilant notes seemed so much like mockery. She knew it was the custom, but the music grated none the less harshly, and, drawing her veil over her face, she wept silently, occasionally glancing backward to the spot of freshly upturned earth where Rockland's first soldier was buried,—the brave, self-denying George, who gave all he had for his country, and died in her behalf.

Four weeks after George's death, Annie left the cottage in the Hollow, and went to live for a time with Mrs. Mather. Early orphaned and thrown upon the charities of a scheming aunt, who, after her marriage with George, had cast her off entirely, there was now no one to whom she could look for help and sympathy save Rose, and when the latter insisted that her home should be Annie's also, while William, too, joined his entreaties with those of his wife, and urged as one reason his promise made to George, Annie consented on condition that, as soon as her health was sufficiently restored, she should do something for herself, either as teacher or governess in some private family.

To be Continued.

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