

## LOVE'S TRIUMPH.

A STORY OF LOVE AND WAR.

BY MARY J. HOLMES.

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

Tom's cheek flushed to an unnatural whiteness, as with parted lips and flashing eyes he watched the now cornered prisoner. The rescue, the handsome, graceful stranger, whose appearance rivaled Isaac's, attention at once, causing him to gaze spell-bound upon the face of the advancing foe, as if it were one he had seen before. How handsome that young man was, with his sunny laughing eyes of black, his soft, silken curls of hair, and that air of self-assurance, which bespoke a daring, reckless spirit. Isaac could not remove his eyes from the young rebel, and his late antagonist met with no resistance, as he passed his arms around him and held him prisoner. At last, Isaac did not even think of himself; he thought of the stranger, and of whom poor Tom sat gazing, half bewildered, and trying once to stretch his arms toward him, while the lips essayed to speak. But the words he would have uttered died away as a sudden rain, arose without a word, and, leaning heavily upon his captor, hobbled on, caring little now, it would seem, what fate was in reserve for him. He seemed benumbed, and only an occasional groan, which Isaac fancied was wrung out by pain, told that he was conscious of any thing.

"He's lame," Isaac cried, the hot tears raining over his face, while he begged of them to stop, or at least to carry poor Captain Carleton, if they must go on. "I won't run away," he said, imploringly, to his own captor, feeling intuitively that his was the kinder nature. "Don't be afraid of me. I'll help you carry him, if necessary. Do have some pity. He's fainting, see!" and Isaac almost shrieked as poor Tom sank upon the grass, utterly unable to move another step. They must carry him now or leave him there, and anxious for the honor a captured officer of Tom Carleton's evident rank would confer upon them, the rebels availed themselves of Isaac's proffered aid, and the three, bearing their heavy burden, moved slowly on until far beyond the bushes by the stream, where the other soldier sat upon the ground, his laughing black eyes heavy with tears, and his heart throbbing with a keener pain than he had ever known before.

"It was wrong to let him go," he said, aloud. "Three against two would surely have carried the day, and that boy at his side was brave. I know. But I cannot now be helped. He is their prisoner, and all that remains for me to do is to see that the best of treatment comes to him until he is released. But what are the dead coming back to life?" and the soldier started up as he caught a sound of bending twigs near by.

## CHAPTER IX.

Bill Baker was awake at last, and from his hiding-place had seen Captain Carleton and Isaac disappear beneath the trees in the distance. "They are gone," he muttered to himself. "Won't that snap dragon of a widow be mad, though when she hears how they've got Ike. Poor Ike, I'd help him if I could, but taint no use interfin' now," and with this reflection Bill turned his attention towards the stranger, watching him for several minutes, first to decide his politics, and second, to calculate his probable strength. The soldier was at least a head taller than Bill, who nevertheless far exceeded him in strength of muscle and power of endurance.

"I can manage him," was Bill's contemptuous comment, and feeling in his pocket for the strong cord Rose Mather had bound round his paper parcel of turnovers and cheese, he prepared to spring upon his foe in the rear and take him by surprise. The cracking twigs betrayed him, and changing his tactics he walked directly in front of the astonished young man, who, with heightened color, haughtily demanded "what he was doing there, and whether he were a friend or a foe."

"What am I doin' here?" Bill repeated, sticking his cap a little more to one side, and half shutting one of his wicked grey eyes. "Kinder peekin' round to see what I can find. Be I friend or foe? You must be green to ask that. Don't you recognize my regiments, made after the cut of Uncle Sam, ailed some, to be sure, but then I've been at a dirty job, been lickin' jest such scamps as you. Now, then, corporal, sez' I answered you civil, what are you doin' here? You won't answer me, eh?" he continued, as the stranger deigned him no other reply than a look of ineffable disdain. "Well, then, if you're so 'frail of your tongue, s'posin' we try a rustic, rough and tumble, you know, and the one that gets beat is father's prisoner. That's fair, as these dead folks will witness," and Bill's glance for the first time fell upon the bodies lying near them, upon Charles's childish face, with the golden curls clustering around it.

The sight touched a tender chord in Bill's soul, forgetting for a moment his new acquaintance, he bent over the drummer boy, murmuring:

"Poor child, your folks or'to have

been ashamed to let you come to war. Now was the rebel's time. He felt intuitively that he was no match for the thickest, bravest Bill. Safety lay alone in flight, and with a sudden bound he fled like a deer.

"Nuff said," dropped from Bill's lips, and the next instant he, too, was flying through the woods in pursuit of the foe. It proved an unequal race, and Bill's strong arms ere long closed like a vice around the struggling soldier, who resisted manfully, until resistance was vain, and then sullenly stood still, while Bill fastened his hand behind him, with the cords unwittlingly furnished by Rose Mather.

"Don't squirm so, corporal," said Bill, as he bound the knots securely, with his knee upon the back of the stranger, whom he had thrown upon his face. "Don't squirm so like an eel, and I'll be done the quicker. I calculate to tie you so you can't git away, and you may as well hold on. Got kinder delicate hands, hain't you? Never done nothin', I guess, but lick niggers and shute your betters. There, you may stan' up now, if you want ter."

The young man struggled to his feet, saying, proudly:

"What do you intend doing next, sir?"

"What do I intend doin'?" replied Bill, with imperturbable gravity. "I intend leadin' you by this string into camp, and showin' you up for to'pence a sight. What d'ye s'pose I intend doin'?"

The young man made one more desperate struggle to free himself, but the twine only cut into his flesh, making the matter worse, so he finally submitted to his fate, and suffered Bill to take him where he listed. Bill was in no hurry to get to camp. He rather enjoyed being alone with his prisoner, and, leading him a little thicker, he made him sit down, and placing one of his feet upon him he began to ask him innumerable questions, what was his name, where did he come from, what company was he in, and so on, to none of which did the stranger vouchsafe a reply.

With a haughty look upon his handsome face, he maintained a rigid silence, while Bill continued:

"Needn't talk unless you want to. Speech is free with us, you know; but sez' you won't tell who you be, maybe you wouldn't mind hearin' my story. I'll make you feel, better, maybe, to know my reputation and standin' in society. Corporal, did you ever hear of a Yankee, a real live mudsill Yankee, such as Southern gentlemen feed above fightin' with? Well, I'm that critter. What do you think of me, take me as a hull?"

The stranger groaned in disgust, and Bill continued:

"Them words hurt you, I guess. Like enough I'll ease 'em up a trifle, if you say so. I ain't hard-hearted if I be rough as a nutmeg grater. Shall I loose 'em so's not to hurt them soft, baby hands of yours?"

"Thank you, sir. I don't mind it in the least," was the soldier's answer, though all the while the coarse twine was cutting, cruelly into the tender flesh.

This Bill suspected, and muttering to himself:

"Good grit; if he is a rebel," he went on: "Considerable top-lot, ain't you, corporal? And as chaps of your cloth like to meet with their equals, I'll go on with my history. I was born in Massachusetts, not over a day's ride from Boston. Ever been to Boston?"

No answer from the stranger, save a heightened color, and Bill proceeded:

"Tall old town. Got a smashin' monument out to Charlestown. Heard on't, I s'pose, as I take it some of you Southern dogs can read. Wall, father died in State's Prison down there to Charlestown, and then we moved to Rockland, the old woman, Hal and me. Hal's lyin' up there where the hottest of the fight took place, and I'm here to-

day. "What am I doin' here?" Bill repeated, sticking his cap a little more to one side, and half shutting one of his wicked grey eyes. "Kinder peekin' round to see what I can find. Be I friend or foe? You must be green to ask that. Don't you recognize my regiments, made after the cut of Uncle Sam, ailed some, to be sure, but then I've been at a dirty job, been lickin' jest such scamps as you. Now, then, corporal, sez' I answered you civil, what are you doin' here? You won't answer me, eh?" he continued, as the stranger deigned him no other reply than a look of ineffable disdain. "Well, then, if you're so 'frail of your tongue, s'posin' we try a rustic, rough and tumble, you know, and the one that gets beat is father's prisoner. That's fair, as these dead folks will witness," and Bill's glance for the first time fell upon the bodies lying near them, upon Charles's childish face, with the golden curls clustering around it.

The sight touched a tender chord in Bill's soul, forgetting for a moment his new acquaintance, he bent over the drummer boy, murmuring:

"Poor child, your folks or'to have

mentin' you by tellin' you my character. I've been to the work-house twice. I have, I s'wan, been gettin' drunk, and once for somethin' else a good deal wus. How do you feel now," and Bill leered wickedly at the young man, who seemed bent on keeping silence.

Only the expression of his face told the extreme contempt he felt for his companion, and how it did wound to the quick one of his nature to be held a prisoner by such a William Baker. But there was no help for it; he must submit to be taken to Washington by the despised Bill, and then, oh how his heart sank within him as he thought, what then? Was there no method of escape? Couldn't he get away, or, better yet, couldn't he hire Bill to let him go? Strange he had not thought of this before. Yankees were proverbially avaricious, and almost every man had his price. He could try, at all events, and unbending his dignity, he inquired what Bill would ask to let him go.

"What'll I ask?" repeated Bill, placing both feet instead of one upon his prisoner. "I dun know. Le'sa dicker a spell and see. What'll you give, and where do you keep your traps?"

"In my pockets," the unsuspecting soldier answered; "there's my watch and chain, worth over three hundred dollars."

"Whew-ew!" whistled Bill, his face lighting up instantly, while hope crept into the stranger's heart. "A gold watch worth over three hundred! Let's see the critter."

"You forget that my hands are tied," the stranger suggested.

"So they be, but mine ain't," and the next moment Bill was holding to his ear an elegant Parisian watch, and asking if the stranger were positive sure it cost more'n three hundred dollars. "I had an old pewter thing that I gin to mother," he said, and this concern just came upon the stranger's face, as if he let you out stick and run?

"Yes, sir; I give you that in exchange for my liberty."

"Wall, now, kind a generous, ain't you? But I want you should ding in something to dish the bargain. A chap of your cloth is of more value than your three hundred. What else have you got, corporal?" and, laying the watch carefully upon the grass, Bill's hand a second time sought the stranger's pocket, bringing out an expensive and exquisitely wrought quizzing-glass.

"Wall, now if these ain't the curiousest spectacles!" he exclaimed. "I'll jest see how a reb looks through 'em," and adjusting them to his eyes, Bill walked demurely around his prisoner, and then standing at a little distance inspected him minutely, as if he had been some curious monster. "Hanged if I can see in 'em, but maybe they'll suit the old woman to hum," he said, placing the glass beside the watch and adding: "Watch and spectacles ain't enough, corporal. Where a ring on one of your hands?"

"Yes, a costly diamond," was the faint response, and Bill ere long was trying in vain to push it over his large joints.

"It don't fit me, but I guess 'twill my general, when I git one," he said, laying that, too, with the watch and eyeglass.

A silver tobacco-box and handsome cigar-case followed next, the stranger groaning mentally, as a faint suspicion of Bill's real intentions crossed his mind. There remained now but one more article, the dearest of all the young rebel possessed, and the perspiration started from every pore as he felt the rough hand again within his pockets, and muttered, as he could not prevent it, "Oh, no, no, no, not that! Spare me that. Do not open it please!" and the haughty tone was changed to one of earnest supplication, as Bill drew forth a small duaguerrean case, and placed his dirty thumb upon the spring.

Something in the stranger's voice made him pause a moment, but anything like delicacy of feeling was unknown to the rough Bill, and the next instant he was feasting his rude gaze upon the features which the rebel youth had guarded almost religiously, even from his equals in camp. How beautiful that girlish face was, with its bright, laughing eyes, and soft chestnut curls falling in such profusion around the girlish brow, and upon the smooth, crept over him, as if he had seen that face before, and mingled with his feeling came remembrances of that last day at home, when fair hands, which, ere he was a soldier, would have scorned to touch such as his, had waved him an adieu.

"Whew-ew!" he whistled, at last. "Ain't she pretty, though? Your sweet-heart, I guess, and he leered at the stranger, who made him no reply; only the lips quivered, and in the dark eyes there was a gathering moisture; but when Bill asked, "May I have this, too, if I'll let you go?" the stranger answered, promptly:

"Never! I'll die a thousand deaths before I'll part with that! Liberty is not worth that price. Give me back that picture, and I'll go with you, willingly wherever you please. Do give it back," he added, in an agony of fear, as Bill continued gazing at it and making his remarks.

"Can't a feller look at a gal on glass if he wants to? I wouldn't hurt the little critter if I could as well as not. So you may as well give him to me, nor tell me who 'tis, neither?"

"Stranger," said the rebel, "have you any feelings of refinement?"

"Nary feelin'," and Bill shook his head, but did not withdraw his eyes from the picture.

"Well, then, have you a wife?"

To be continued.

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