

CAPTAIN REID'S DILEMMA

CAPTAIN REID had driven over from the hospital to the Union Station to bid "God speed" to some pals who were leaving that night for Overseas with the —Battalion. After making his adieus, he sat on a truck that had been shoved into a secluded corner of the platform, leisurely lighted his pipe, and watched with sympathetic interest the throngs of eager, hurrying, khaki-clad men and their friends.

He saw women, old and young, vieing with each other in their distribution of sunny smiles and sparkling repartee. Even though the bright farewell smiles were but veils hiding floods of unshed tears, and tremulous lips almost refused to form the words of vivacious nonsense, they cheered their loved ones, effacing for the moment the dull, sickening pain of coming separation.

Just as the Captain was furtively wiping away a suspicious moisture from his eyes, he felt a gentle pressure upon his arm; turning in surprise he heard a sympathetic voice saying, "You poor lonesome soldier! Are you feeling badly because you have no friends down to see you off?"

He wiped his eyes again, not that it was necessary, but he had to do something in order to recover his composure, for a little grey-robed Quakerish girl, with a quaint, serious face and wonderful eyes, sat calmly beside him.

"I've been watching you for a long time and finally decided that it would be better for you to have me than no one," she informed him, naively.

For the first time in his life, popular, versatile Alec. Reid was nonplussed; he had been fairly fed upon girls for years—but this girl was different—he feared to affect dignity, she might think he resented her friendly advances, and on the other hand, if he responded as genially as his feelings prompted, the only really safe proceeding was to take recourse once more to his handkerchief.

"I must admit I wasn't altogether unselfish in coming over to you," she continued, in a sweet, inconsequent way, looking discreetly away while he removed all traces of agitation.

"You see, I've been looking for a friendless soldier of my own for some time—one I could send gum and Sunday papers to and knit socks for, like these dear Toronto girls."

"What manner of girl is this," commented Alec. Reid, wonderingly.

"We are Southern people and strangers in your city," she continued, "but although we are working for different societies, I want someone Overseas to take care of all myself," she concluded, wistfully.

"Bless you, little Quaker girl," heartily exclaimed Capt. Reid, as he sprang to attention and gravely saluted her. Unhesitatingly she placed her hand in the one so cordially extended.

"You're feeling better already, aren't you?" she said, encouragingly, as she looked for the first time directly into his handsome face. "Oh, dear," she murmured, in consternation, hastily withdrawing her hand. "I didn't know you were so—so—"

"So what?" he urged, curiously.

"So good looking," she confessed, surveying the strong face with its clear-cut features and the erect bearing of the broad shoulders, with dismay. "All the time I was looking at you, your back was turned towards me, and—"

Alec. had the grace to blush like a school boy at this bare-faced compliment, as he carefully buttoned the long raincoat which completely hid his immaculate uniform. Unaccustomed as she evidently was to Canadian Militia, his leather puttees would easily pass unnoticed. He forgot that the Colonel would likely be fuming about his car, "which, by the way, he had borrowed." He forgot that he was to take night duty on the Wards at nine o'clock—he forgot of everything but the fact that he wanted the friendship of this slip of a girl who so unceremoniously drifted his life a few moments before.

"You must get busy, you have very little time," he remarked, in a business-like way, looking through a memorandum for an empty page. "Like the Kitchener heel?" she questioned, her pencil poised.

In Which Miss Betty Brown Found Somebody to Look After

By NELLIE GRAY

"Eh?" blankly ejaculated Alec.

"I'm taking notes on your socks," she reminded him, calmly. "Or perhaps you find the turned heel more comfortable?" she queried, thoughtfully, as she jotted down a word here and there.

He sat stupidly wondering if he had any holes in his socks, she'd likely want to measure his feet next.

"And now, your full name and address," she demanded.

Capt. Reid felt creepy all over. Wildly and desperately he tried to think of a fictitious name, but to save his life he couldn't think of any other than his own. He couldn't even remember the number of the battalion to which he was supposed to be attached.

"Well?" she asked, mischievously. "Are you like Topsy? 'Ain't got no name?'"

"It's quite longish," he demurred. "Maybe I'd better send it to you from—"

"Montreal?" prompted his new friend.

"Good-bye, good luck, and God bless you," she said, so earnestly, a moment later, that it sounded like a benediction to the man who for the second time warmly clasped her hand. In another instant all that was left of the grey-clad girl was a card on which was written:

Betty Brown,
General Delivery,
Toronto.

"Mail one of these at every available place along the line," instructed Alec. Reid, handing a departing comrade a package of post cards bearing the above address, and signed "Alec. Reid."

THREE months later, on the night of her twentieth birthday, before Christmas, Betty Brown sat on a stool beside a cheery grate fire in the spacious living-room of her mother's comfortable apartment, her lap and every available bit of space around her literally strewn with foreign correspondence. Egyptian Mother of Pearl ornaments, and beads of every conceivable hue, were artistically arranged upon a couch, small war trophies consisting of battered trinkets occupied an elevated position on the mantel, while an exquisitely carved bracelet and necklace adorned her slender person. She shivered as the wind howled and driving sleet rattled against the windows.

"Mother, do you think Alec. is doing without warm clothes and nourishing food to send me these beautiful things?" she asked, wistfully, turning to her mother, who sat at the table, industriously narrowing the toe of Alec's eighteenth sock.

"I know for a fact, honey, he hasn't cold feet, anyway," was Mrs. Brown's comforting assurance.

"If only he weren't so painfully reticent about himself," sighed Betty, turning her face again to the fire-light.

"Has it ever occurred to you, dear, that this 'Child of Adoption' may be sailing under false colours?" suggested her mother, seriously.

"Mother!" exclaimed Betty, in a pained, hurt voice. But, regretfully, "I keep forgetting you haven't seen him as I saw him—honest, straightforward, and—"

"But how about even you, Betty?" interrupted her mother, crossing over to the fire, and lovingly tilting the sweet, reproachful face. "Have you told him your father is a rich man?"

"He—he—thinks I'm a book-keeper," confessed Betty, ruefully. "In a letter I happened to say I had been busy getting my books balanced—I forgot to say 'Red Cross Books.'"

The bell rang and the door opened simultaneously.

"There was a parcel with Miss Betty's letter at the General Delivery," announced the Janitor's son, staggering into the room with an immense box in his sturdy arms.

Betty eagerly untied the knots, while Mrs. Brown

filled the puffing Billy's pockets with oranges and rosy apples.

"Happy birthday, Miss Betty!" he called, heartily, and shutting the door with a bang.

"Is it for you or me?" she gaily inquired, picking up a card from the floor, which read, "Birthday Greetings, from Alec. to Betty."

"Oh, how lovely!" she cried, catching sight of Betty sitting on the floor beside the empty box, her dark curly head bent caressingly over masses of fragrant white roses she held in her arms.

"I just know he can't do all this on a dollar ten a day, mother," she said, raising a troubled, tear-stained face.

THERE were troublous times at the Reid's that same birthday night.

"This is the climax," exclaimed Alec., rising abruptly from his desk, and meeting his mother half way as she entered the room.

"A new development in the Betty-case?" she enquired, looking with interest at the slip of paper in his outstretched hand.

"Yes, a cheque for ten dollars to buy myself something nice to eat," he answered, ironically, as he threw himself into a chair.

"Heavens, mother!" he continued, vehemently. "When I look at all the stuff I've taken without protest from that poor little kid book-keeper, it drives me nearly mad."

Mrs. Reid sighed as she looked thoughtfully over the neatly arranged collection of socks, scarves, collar-bands, gum, Sunday papers, candy-boxes, magazines, etc., lying in state on the bed.

"This isn't the worst of it, either," he remarked, regretfully. "Mac writes that the eats she sends over there are fit for a king."

"What are you going to do about it, son?" she asked, gently, sitting upon the arm of his chair and smoothing his rumpled hair. They had always shared their troubles, this mother and son.

"I've done it," he replied, with finality, picking up a freshly written note and handing it to her.

"Dear Betty,—(she read half aloud).

"I am not a needy soldier Overseas, but a contemptible cad of a M. D. Captain at home, living a life of luxury and ease.

"I practised deception to win your friendship, now I'm resorting to confession in the hope of winning your love. You see, there is 'method in my madness' whichever way you look at it. Forgive me and marry me, Betty. Please do not keep me in suspense, but let me hear from you soon.

"ALEC.

"Address: Capt. Alec. Reid,

"— Hospital,

"Toronto."

Hot, blinding tears fell upon the open letter. It had come, this thing she had dreaded for years. Alec. threw his arm protectingly about her, drawing her gently upon his knee. There was no need of words.

"You will love her, mother," he declared, confidently.

"You are sure you are not doing this through an exaggerated sense of honour, dear?" she asked, in a low voice.

"I have asked her to be my wife because I love her," he returned, firmly.

A horn tooted impatiently outside.

"There's the car, Alec., and you haven't even started to dress," his mother cried in dismay, pointing to an elaborate masquerade costume hanging over the foot of the bed. "I must run away and sew the tapes on your mask," she said, hurrying from the room.

THE "Army Medical" Masquerade Ball was at its height this self-same birthday night. 'Neath the soft glow of iridescent lights, grotesque, spooky forms gracefully responded to the rhythm of weird music. Kings hobnobbed with char-women, Queens in royal purple flirted outrageously with coloured boot-blacks, the Sultan of Turkey danced four times