

LOVE'S TRIUMPH.

A STORY OF LOVE AND WAR.

BY MARY J. HOLMES.

Author of "Lena Rivers," "Edna Browning,"

"Tempest and Sunshine," Etc., Etc.

"That, however, was this time the voice was decidedly authoritative in its tone, but what more Rose might have added was cut short by the widow, who dropped the 'griddle' with a bang, and turning sharply round replied:

"There's no Bridget here, and if it's you, my dear, I am Mrs. Joseph Simms."

Rose had good reason for remembering Mrs. Simms, and coloring crimson, she tried to apologize:

"I beg your pardon, I did not see your face. I imagined everybody kept a girl, and your back looked like—"

"Don't make the matter any worse," interrupted the widow, smiling in spite of herself at Rose's attempt to excuse her blunder. "You thought from my dress that I was a hired girl, and so I was in my younger days, and I don't give the war for it neither. Miss Simms, is she? She's had a good deal over it, I think. Here's the water, and filling a gourd shell she handed it to Rose, who, in her admiration of the (to her) novel drinking cup, came near forgetting Annie."

But Annie did not care, for the encounter between the widow and Rose found her laughing the first really hearty laugh she had enjoyed since George went away.

"It's just like this," Rose said, as she resumed her seat by Annie, listening intently while she told how kind the Widow Simms had been, coming every day to stay with her, and only leaving her at night because Annie insisted that she should.

"I like Mrs. Simms!" was Rose's vehement exclamation, "and I am glad Tom said what he did about Isaac, and I used to see our wood. I did not tell you, did I? And there's something real nice about your husband, too. I mean to call her in while I read it," and Rose ran out to the wood-shed, where the widow was now splitting a pine board for kindling, the newspaper she had first had used, having burned entirely up."

Rose's manner and voice were very complimentary as she said:

"Please, Mrs. Simms, come in and listen while I read what brother Tom has written about Mr. Graham, and your Isaac—something perfectly splendid. Tom has volunteered and gone to Washington, you know."

It was strange how those few words changed the widow's opinion of Rose. The fact that Thomas Carleton, whom the Rockland people fancied, was a Secessionist, had joined the Federal army, did much towards effecting this change, but not so much as the fact that he had actually noticed her boy, and spoken of him in a letter.

"Miss Mather isn't so bad after all," she thought, and striking her axe into the log, she followed Rose to the sitting-room, listening eagerly while she read the few sentences pertaining to George and Isaac. They were as follows:

"By the way, Will, I find there's a company here from Rockland. Fine appearing fellows, too, most of them are, and under good discipline. I am especially pleased with the second lieutenant. He's a magnificent looking man, and attracts attention wherever he goes."

"That's George, you know," and Rose, quite as much pleased as Annie herself, nodded towards the latter, whose pale cheek flushed with pride at hearing her husband thus spoken of by Rose Mather's brother.

"Yes, but Isaac," interrupted the widow. "Whereabouts does he come in?"

"Oh, pretty soon. I'll get to him. There's more about George yet," answered Rose, as she resumed her reading.

"I had the pleasure of talking to him yesterday, and found him very intelligent and sensible. If we had more men like him, success would be sure and speedy. He has about him a great deal of fun and humor, which so far exceeds keeping up the spirits of his company, and some of the poor fellows need it sadly. There's a young boy in the ranks, Isaac Simms, who interests him greatly."

"Oh-h!" and the widow drew a long sigh as Rose continued:

"I wonder he was ever suffered to come, he seems so young, so girl-like, and so gentle. Still he does a great deal of good, Lieut. Graham tells me, by visiting the sick and sharing with them any delicacy he happens to have. He's rather homesick, I imagine, for when I asked him if he had a mother, he chin quivered in a moment, and I saw the tears standing in his eyes. Poor boy, I can't account for the interest I feel in him. Heaven grant that if we come to open fight he may not fall a victim."

"Yes, yes, my boy, my darling boy," and burying her face in her hand, the widow sobbed aloud. "I thank you, Miss Mather, for reading me that," she said, "and I thank your brother for writing it. Tell him so, will you. Tell him I'm nothing but a cross, sour-grained, snappish old woman, but I have a mother's heart, and I bless him for speaking so kindly of my boy."

Rose's tears fell fast as she folded up the letter, and Annie's kept company with them. There was a bond of sympathy now between the three, as they talked together of the soldiers, Mrs. Simms and Annie desiring various methods by which they might be benefited, and Rose wishing, she too, could do something for them.

"But I can't," she said, despairingly. "I never did anybody any real good in all my life—only bothered them," and Rose sighed as she thought how useless and harmless was her present mode of life.

"You'll learn by and by," said the widow, in a tone unusually soft for her; then, as if the sock she held in her lap had suggested the idea, she continued, "Can you knit?"

Rose shook her head. "Nor your mother, neither?"

"Again Rose shook her head, feeling quite ashamed that she should lack this accomplishment."

"Well," the widow went on, "I don't much use to learn now. 'Twould take a year to get one stocking done, but if when winter comes, that brother of yours wants socks and mittens, or the like of that, tell him I'll knit 'em for him."

"Oh, you are so kind!" cried Rose, thinking to herself, how she'd send some pineapple preserves, such as she had with dessert that day.

They grew to like each other very fast after this, and Rose staid until the little round table was arranged for tea, and rolled to Annie's bedside. There was no plate for Rose, the widow having deemed it, preposterous that she should stay, but the table looked so cozy, with its tiny black teapot, and its nicely buttered toast, that Rose invited herself, with such a pretty patronizing way, that the widow failed to see the condescension it implied. It did not, however, escape Annie's observation, but she could not feel angry with the little lady, touching her bone-handled knife as if she were afraid of it, and looking round in quest of a napkin she failed to find, for Widow Simms had banished napkins from the table as superfluous articles, which answered no earthly purpose, save the putting an extra four cents into the pocket of the washerwoman, Harry Baker's mother.

It was growing late, and the sunset shadows were already creeping into the hollow when Rose bade Annie good-bye, promising to come again ere long, and wondering as she took her homeward way, whence came the calm, quiet peace which made Annie Graham so happy, even though her husband was far away in the midst of danger and death. Rose had heard that Annie was a Christian, and so were many others whom she knew, but they were much like herself—good, well-meaning people, amiable, but let their husbands once join the army and they would make quite as much fuss as she, who did not profess to be anything. And then, for the first time in her life, Rose wished she, too, could learn from Annie's teacher, and so have something to sustain her in case her husband should go. But he wouldn't go—and, if he did, all the religion in the world could not make her resigned, and the tears sprang to Rose's eyes as she hurried up the handsome, walk to the piazza, where Will sat smoking his cigar in the hazy twilight. She told him where she had been, and then sitting upon his knee, told him of Annie, wishing she could be like her, and asking if he did not wish so, too.

Will made no direct reply. His thoughts were evidently elsewhere, and after a few minutes he said, hesitatingly:

"Would it break my darling's heart if I should join Tom at Washington?"

There was a cry of horror, and Rose hid her face in her husband's bosom. "Oh, Will, you shan't, you can't, you mustn't and won't! I didn't know you ever thought of such a cruel thing. Don't you love me any more? I'll try to do better, I certainly will!" and Rose nestled closer to him, holding his hands just as Annie Graham had once held her husband's.

"You could not be much better, neither could I love you better than I do now, Rose, darling," Mr. Mather replied, kissing her childish brow. "But Rose, be reasonable once, and listen while I tell you how, ever since the fall of Sumter, I have thought the time would come when I should be needed, resolving, too, that when it came, it should not find me a second Sarah Jane's cousin!"

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isn't contented simply because she uses SURPRISE Soap; but the use of this soap contributes largely to her contentment. In proportion to its cost, it's the largest factor in household happiness.

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The sudden lifting of Rose's head, and her look of perplexed inquiry, showed that, notwithstanding the fanciful ornament styled a diploma lying in her writing-desk, Spelling-books had not the honor of being numbered among her acquaintances. But her heart was too full to ask an explanation, and her husband continued:

"Besides that, there was a mutual understanding between Tom and myself that if one went the other would, and he has gone—nobly laying aside all the party prejudice which for a time influenced his conduct. Our country needs more men."

"Yes, yes," gasped Rose; "but more have gone. There's scarcely a boy left in town, and it's just as everywhere."

Mr. Mather smiled as he replied: "I know the boys have gone—boys whose fair, beardless faces should put to shame a strong, full-grown man like me. And another class, too, have gone, our laboring young men, leaving behind them poverty and little helpless children, whereas, I have nothing of that kind for an excuse."

"Oh, I wish I had a dozen children, if that would keep you," cried Rose, the insane idea flashing upon her that she would at once adopt a score or more of them, and thus be helping in the maddening hollow that afternoon.

Mr. Mather smiled and continued: "Suppose you try and accustom yourself to the idea of living a while without me. I shall not die until my appointed time, and shall undoubtedly come back again. Don't you see?"

"No, Rose didn't. Her heart was too full of pain to see anything but her own life as a woman, and she was sobbing passionately, one moment accusing her husband of not loving her as he used to, and the next begging of him to abandon his wild project."

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