

doubt—while the other men smoked their pipes after the dinner hour at Spillane's.

She worked with tenfold energy, but her power of accomplishment was less. She had repelled the neighbor's sympathy, and now it was offered no more. They respected the closed door, the forbidding back which Rose turned to the world when she worked in the garden. It was wonderful how in Jack's absence the weeds made headway, wonderful how the hedges grew ragged, the grass dishevelled, how untidiness and disrepair seized on everything.

To be sure John did his best, but John was getting old. People said he had aged suddenly when Jack went away. When he came home from work he was better content to sit and smoke, with the head of Grip, Jack's old terrier, on his knee, than to do anything more strenuous. Grip was a trouble to Rose too. He was always listening for a foot, turning his eyes on her with a dumb question that made the poor woman suffer acutely.

No letter came from Jack, no such loving message as would have lit up the lonely present with hope for the future. The other boys wrote home at long intervals. They were no great scholars and letter writing was a pain to them. Jack was all right. He was serving on the Admiral's ship, not on the 'Knight Commander.' He was as expert as anybody in a very little time. He hadn't much to say when they saw him.

Once there was a message, but for John, a tender message, as though the young man's obdurate heart had failed him. But of Rose not a word. Not a line from Jack himself, although he was a much better scholar than his brothers.

Rose rarely went out now, never unless necessity called her. Once or twice she had seen Mary Kelly's tall figure approaching her, and had turned back to her own house to avoid meeting her. She would watch from behind a window curtain Mary pass with her chin in the air. Mary's pride was at least equal to her own. But, despite her spirit, Mary was looking badly. That chin now, which had been so round and white, had shrunk and showed a thinness of the neck. Sorrow had dimmed her eyes and her pretty bright color. She was much thinner than of old, and walked with a more lagging footstep when Rose's eyes were not upon her. Sometimes her head drooped as though the great mass of corn-colored plaits it carried were too much for it.

To be sure she worked harder than ever. Her mother had had a worse winter than usual with the rheumatism, and was in bed half her time. And Mary worked like three people to earn her little salary at the convent, and to keep the cabin over the thriftless mother and the children, who were so round and rosy, despite their privations.

One year, two years passed, Jim and Paddy and Bill had each had their few weeks of holiday, had fluttered the girls immensely with their picturesque sail-or garb and their sun-browned comeliness. Each had a good report of Jack to make in his taciturn manner. Each in his turn carried a message from Jack to Mary Kelly. There was no message for the mother. She had a jealous knowledge that smote her to the heart of the messages which were carried elsewhere. After each of their visits Mary noticeably picked up, regained something of her old comeliness, her old springing step.

The time came when Jack was with the Naval Brigade before Ladysmith. When the news first arrived that he had gone to the front there was a half rapprochement between the two women. Mary passing by the Quinn's cottage, stood for a barely perceptible fraction of a second looking at Jack's mother. She had something in her breast which was her talisman against life and death, yet it could not keep her from asking herself why she had let him go. Rose advanced a step or two. She knew that Mary had had a letter. John had had one that had contained no mention of her. She advanced an imperceptible distance. Then jealousy stabbed her sharper than a sword. She turned her back on the girl and went into the cottage.

After that there was a dreary time of watching and waiting for the two women. Rose was no scholar and was very shy about revealing the fact, and John was getting half blind. The anguish which Rose endured while John's finger crept slowly down the war news night after night, the more intolerable waiting through the days till John should come home to read for her these odd hieroglyphics which might mean so much to her, were cruel. And to be sure Mary Kelly could tell at the first glance if Jack was safe, if one might breathe a sigh of relief for oneself with a sigh of pity for the many whose sons' names appeared in that dreaded list.

To be sure the garden and everything about it had become sadly changed from what it was when Jack was at home, although Rose worked indefatigably, worked till her back could hardly straighten itself, till her limbs ached and her head swam. She was planting cabbages one mild, fine spring day, when she heard the sound of rushing feet close by, and some one flung the little gate open and made straight for her. It was Mary Kelly, but so wild, so disordered, that she was almost unrecognisable for the quiet refined girl of every day life. She had a newspaper in her hand which was flying open in the March wind.

'He's hurt,' she cried, 'he's hurt. He's been struck by a piece of shell. He's in hospital.'

Apparently she had forgotten the injuries she had suffered at Rose's hands, and had come to her as the one other being on earth who loved Jack as she did.

Then the something really fine and high-minded which gave Rose's character its distinction appeared.

'We have to bear it together,' she said, and passing an arm about Mary's shoulders she led her within the cottage and closed the door, to the great disappointment of the neighbors who had followed in Mary's wake, and were coming as near as they dared, considering Rose's formidable name.

In the sad vicissitudes of the days that followed the two women clung together. Sometimes there was no news at all; sometimes the news was of a varying shade of blackness. It was some weeks before the first glimmer of hope came, and those weeks had made Rose old and Mary a spectre of her former comeliness.

But at last there was hope, and when the hope once came it grew stronger and brighter every day. In fact Jack mended so rapidly that in barely two months time from the date on which he had received his wound he was reported as dismissed hospital, and returned to active service. But by that time the worst of the war had spent itself and Jack was soon coming home.

Long before that, however, the most complete reconciliation had been effected between Jack's mother and Mary. They had become the closest and dearest of friends. Reconciliation was hardly the word, when Mary would not listen to Rose's abasement of herself. 'Sure there's nothing to forgive between us,' she would say, 'and if there was, wouldn't I have to be forgiven for taking him from you?'

Another strange thing happened that spring. Mrs. Kelly had a letter from her brother in America, a brother unheard of for many years. He was coming home. He had made money and was going to buy the farm on the slope of the mountains where he had been born, if it was possible to buy it. He was going to add to its narrow bounds. He was a widower without children, and he wanted his sister and her children to live with him.

It would have been a bad lookout for Matthew Brady if Mary had not been training up the children her own way ever since she had been of an age to make the diversion from her mother's slatternliness. The little girls were at the convent school, the boys were with the Christian Brothers. Their faces were so polished with soap and water, their hair so sleek, their clothes so well washed and brushed and so carefully mended, that none could have supposed they were the children of steelish Judy Kelly. The children had begun to put Judy on one side in an affectionate manner. She had grown so used to being given a chair in the sun, while the children washed and cleaned, that she had almost forgotten to grumble over the scandalous misuse of water and scrubbing brushes that was like to give her her death of cold.

Meanwhile what was to become of Mary when the family moved up to the mountain farm? It would be too far for Mary to come and go to Rose as she had been used to. Since Biddy and Katey had proved so useful about the house, Mary had been a good deal with Rose, helping her with one thing or another. That summer the garden bloomed resplendent with sweet peas and carnations, with holly-hocks and stocks and lilies and cabbage roses. For, to be sure, Jack might soon be expected home. He was sure to get leave after his long absence. He knew now that Mary and his mother were reconciled, and he wrote long, loving letters to one woman as well as to the other.

Then—it was about June—they had a great disappointment. The Admiral's ship was going to the Rock to Gibraltar instead of to England, and, of course, Jack was going with her. There was no knowing when he would have leave now, when he would be able to come home and marry Mary. And to be sure if he could come home itself, wouldn't he have to go back again and serve his time? It would only be a honeymoon and he would have to go back again.

(To be concluded next week.)