

Lady Dexley could not quite understand the attitude Ree had adopted; she had expected to see her wearing herself out with tears, and was surprised to find her a resigned, self-possessed woman.

Summer came and the girls left the convent to spend their holidays at their homes. The place seemed strangely silent to Ree; she missed the many bright, eager faces. Delphine had begged her to accompany her to London, but she refused, preferring to stay in Paris, where she could find more to distract her thoughts and occupy her mind.

Time glided by, and the summer was drawing to a close, when one day Ree, in issuing from the convent to take her usual morning walk, found the city in a curious state of restlessness. Everywhere men stood in groups talking hurriedly and gesticulating excitedly. Something unusual was afoot, she felt assured, to be causing so much discussion among the people! Her attention was soon attracted to large placards announcing that the Germans had declared war against France and were already marching through Belgium to Paris! Ree only stopped long enough to purchase morning papers, then quickly retraced her steps to the convent to acquaint the nuns with the news that even now hostilities were in progress. They were greatly horrified, and grew more horrified as the days went by and they heard of the awful fate of so many of their 'Sisters in religion' in brave Belgium. They were thankful their pupils were at home with their own relatives, and the Mother Superior did not hesitate to have the long dormitories prepared for the reception of the wounded. These, with their polished floors and bare walls, adorned here and there with a crucifix or holy picture, made ideal wards.

The beds were not long vacant, and the convent was soon a veritable hospital. Mother Victoire begged Ree to return to Lady Dexley. She thought the girl would sicken at the sight of so much bloodshed and suffering, but Ree resolutely refused to leave, saying proudly: 'I am a soldier's daughter; you would not have me turn coward; I intend to do my little share in helping my country and her gallant Allies. She at once attended ambulance classes, and was so apt a pupil that in a very short time she was able to give practical help in the nursing and care of the wounded. She worked with untiring zeal and energy, and the soldiers soon learned to watch for her coming to their bedsides. Day after day fresh cases arrived, and many pitiful and heart-rending scenes were witnessed. Winter had passed and spring had come, but it brought no peace with it; the terrible war waged on, leaving death and awful desolation in its train. More wounded soldiers had been brought to the convent, and amongst them an Englishman who had been fighting with the French.

Ree, on hearing that one of her own countrymen was with the fresh arrivals, hastened to his bedside, thinking the man would be glad to hear his own language in a strange country. She looked at the figure stretched on the narrow bed, then drew away as if she had received a blow. With difficulty she repressed a cry of surprise, but quickly recovered her self-control. The man, who had been lying with closed eyes, opened them slowly on hearing a footstep by his bedside; his glance lighted on Ree, and he murmured drowsily in a far-away voice: 'Am I dreaming, or is it Ree?'

'No, you are not dreaming; it is Ree.'

'Thank God! Now I can ask you to pardon me for the wrong I did you. I wrecked your life. I am dying; will you forgive me?'

Ree moved nearer to the bedside, then, looking at the man with a wonderful pity in her beautiful eyes, said in a subdued and compassionate voice: 'I forgave you long ago, and now you have atoned for any wrong you did me by giving up your life for your country.'

'I do not deserve your forgiveness. Cora told me she stopped your marriage. I saw then how completely I had ruined your life, and in spite of all you have acted nobly! Before I went to the front I willed you my money, as a slight reparation for the wrong I did you.'

'My refusal to accept it cannot alter your disposal of it now, but I shall give the money to Cora Tramer,' declared Ree.

The expression on his face grew hard and stern, and he said bitterly: 'No, do not give it to her; she was ever my wicked angel.'

Ree bent lower over the bed and whispered pleadingly: 'Forgive her, as I have forgiven you.'

The look on his face grew softer as he replied: 'Do as you will, it may help to turn her from the evil course she pursues.'

Mother Victoire was paying her usual evening visit to the wounded soldiers. She saw Ree bending low over one of the fresh arrivals and, noticing the look of distress on the girl's white face, felt suddenly alarmed for her. She was about to inquire the cause of her unusual agitation, when her glance fell on the dying man. The recognition was mutual—she instantly divined what had happened. She took the girl's hand in her own, and, tenderly pressing it, led her away. She made no allusion to Ifall—there are times when silence is more eloquent than words. She could see the girl was overwrought with the ordeal she had just passed through—the unshed tears in her eyes spoke for her. 'Come, Ree; this has been too much for you—you must rest!'

It was not until Ree reached the privacy of her own room that she broke down. The tears she had with difficulty restrained whilst at Hall's bedside now flowed freely, and she sobbed aloud.

'Can nothing be done to save his life, Mother Victoire?'

'No, my child; the surgeon says he is mortally wounded, but will probably live a few hours longer. I had the report soon after he was brought in, but had no idea then who he was.'

'It seems terrible to me now, that my happiness can only be secured by his death. Hitherto I have regarded his end with indifference; now I see how callous I have been, but I am thankful I have never wished him ill!'

'Be thankful, also, that his death will be an honorable one.'

Hall died during the night, but Ree was kept from seeing him again. She defrayed all expenses connected with the burial, and Ellen—her kind old heart full of pity—followed him to the grave and laid flowers from her mistress on his resting place.

The Mother Superior wrote and informed Lady Dexley of Hall's death at the convent, and she immediately communicated the fact to Sir Felix. Work in connection with the war was keeping him busy in London, but as soon as he could be released from his duties he journeyed to Paris. He had not announced his coming, but when Ree was summoned to the visitor's parlor she did not stop to inquire who wanted her—she knew—her feet seemed to tread on air, as she swiftly made her way to meet the caller!

'Ree! My Ree!' She suffered herself to be drawn into his arms, the while tears of joy streamed down her face.

'Oh, Felix, what happiness to feel your dear arms round me again and to know I am safe at last!'

'My darling, I have suffered a martyrdom. The separation has been a cruel one.'

'Yes, Felix, but we are well repaid for our sacrifice.'

His hands were trembling as he gently put her at arms' length from him, the better to scan her lovely face—flushed with happiness. 'How you have changed, my Ree!' he exclaimed proudly. 'You have passed from your girlhood to a beautiful womanhood!'

Sir Felix insisted on their marriage taking place as soon as the necessary formalities were concluded; he would not leave Paris until she was his wife. Ree begged to be allowed to stay on at the convent a little longer; there was so much to be done—but he would not hear of it.

They were married one morning in May—just a simple, quiet wedding at the Church for English Catholics in the Avenue Hoche. Neither wanted any display; there was too much suffering and grief around for them to wish to parade their joy. They returned