

ON THE RESERVE

By Shan F. Bullock

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"They settled down on a wee farm back there beyond the canal and in their way managed bravely. True enough, their roses had plenty of thorns. Still, blossoms came sometimes. James was steady and ready. The knack of work came back to him after awhile. He did what he could. Mary strove her best, looked happy and was contented. Like many another couple in these parts, they seemed settled down for life, little beside them, little except drudgery before them, but enough, with the help of God, for all their needs. They had health; they had friends; they had a roof above them, a bit to eat and as much to spare as would pay the rent. What better or more could they want? So the days passed and the months trumped by. Spring came and went, summer slipped away, autumn brought the harvest and left it snug, winter crawled in, and the land went ashen. James put away his spade and went to making nets by the hearthstone. Mary took to dreaming again as she sewed near the candle. About Hollentide a child was born to them. All seemed well and promising well, and then the blow fell, came swift and sudden like a flash from the sky or a bullet from a gun. Ah, but war is the sore thing! It's cruel and heartless! Like death, it spares no one. The happler you are the harder it hits you, and the ones it hurts most are the ones that never see it, the ones that sit drearily at home.

"It was only the other day that the thing happened—only the other day. Mary was at home in the kitchen, singing to the child and baking oat-bread at the table, when in through the doorway comes James with a letter in his hand. He looked a bit strange. I'm thinking, for at sight of his face Mary stops her singing and turns to him. 'What is it, James?' says she. 'That,' answers James, handing her the letter. 'It's come at last.' 'Come,' says Mary. 'What's come?' 'Tell me, James—ah, tell me!' 'They've called me out,' says James. 'Called you out?' says Mary. 'Aye,' says James, 'that's so. I've been expectin' it, but I said nothin'. What was the use of talkin'?' 'Called you out?' says Mary again. 'Where, James, where?' 'Off to the war, I'm thinkin', answers James, and the word was said.

"They tell me that 'fore half an hour after the news came Mary said no word, nor James, nor so much as looked at each other. On this side of the hearth and one that, they sat staring at the fire as dumb as the dead. James sat striving to smoke, Mary striving to think, with the child asleep beside them, and the bread burning on the griddle, and the light in Mary's lap. The blow had come, sir, had come. 'At last James lifts the tongue and stirs the fire, and at that Mary rises, comes over and kneels by him on the floor.

"James," says she, 'sure it's not true? Sure, it can't be true?' 'It's there,' answers he, nodding at the letter, but Mary catches him by the arm.

"No, no, says she, 'ye can't be sure, ye mustn't go. No, no. How can ye go? Ye mustn't, James, ye mustn't!'

"I must," answers James. 'But ye can't, ye mustn't. Ah, my God, it'd break my heart! I'd sooner die at once, now, where I am, than see ye go. Why, it can't be. Sure, God would never punish me like that—to wait here, to be awake thinkin' to see ye go, to sit dreading an' dreading, to see ye in my dream, to know ye were fightin', to have ye face always before me. Ah, my God, I can't! James, ye'll not go. Ah, say ye won't!'

"I must," answers James. 'What—go an' leave us, go an' leave us!'

"I must," answers James. 'Go away from us forever an' ever an' ever!'

"It's there," says James from his stool, looking at the letter. 'I'm on my oath, I'd be a deserter. I must go.'

"An' ye will?"

"I must," answers James, then turns to Mary and strives to comfort her. Sure, there was little to worry about. With God's help all would come right in the end. He'd be back before long. People said the war would last only a month or so. Maybe the doctor would cast him; maybe more troops would not be wanted. And, if he did go, what matter anyway? He'd bring her a pension maybe, and a medal, and loot from the Cape. She'd have government money. With the help of friends she could manage while he was away. He'd write often. He'd—

"Talk to me the good of talk when the sky is falling? What's the use of tongue comfort to a broken woman? As well offer life to a corpse or preach wisdom to a fool. James was going—James was going to the war! Just that was all that Mary heard or knew, and no words could alter it. He was going, going, going. One day soon he would march away, and a bullet would find him, and she'd never see him again. There was the trouble for Mary. Talk was no use, pleading could do nothing, so she went back to her stool, took the child upon her knee and sat reading the fire. Like a stone she sat, dreaming and thinking, as silent as the grave. James is going, going, going, thinks she. Then, in a while, 'What can I do to keep him? What can I do to keep him?' And always, through the weary days that followed, her one thought was that: 'How can I keep him? What can I do to keep him?' And so time went.

"Three days ago (that was Thursday in this week) was fair day in Clooghen, and after breakfast Mary puts on her hat, takes the child and sets out with James for the fair. 'Twas nearly the last day, says she. Better, surely, to spend it together in diversion. 'Why, to be sure,' answers James, nothing loath, and in they trudged to Clooghen. I saw them there myself, going up and down the sidewalks, and

to all appearance the world was well with them. James had his hand in the air and looked a trifle dazed, as well he might, seeing all the friends that were wishful to bid him goodby, and Mary, a little wild in her eyes and unsteady about the lips. But, sure, all that was nothing at all. Not every day a man went to the wars; not every day a woman parted with the man. So most of us pitied Mary and clapped James on the shoulder and wished them both well. God be with them, said we, as the fashion is, and might be bring them safe together again. 'Cheer up, Mary!' said we. 'Cheer up, girl. Sure, it's not every woman in the town has married a hero.' And James laughed in his noisy way, but never a smile came near the lips of Mary. Her face was the color of ashes. She had a wild, haunted look. All the time you were speaking she was just looking through you with her big black eyes, and her lips were quivering. 'Can I keep him?' must have been the thought with her always and ever. 'Can I keep him from going?'

"The day wore on, and about 2 o'clock Mary takes James in to Graham, the watchmaker, on High street, to buy him some trifle of a keepsake to carry away with him. 'It'll be something to look at,' says she and takes her place by the counter, 'something to mind ye of home.' So Graham opens a glass case and brings out his tray of knickknacks—lockets and chains and scarf pins and all the rest—lays it in front of the two and waits for them to make their choice. 'Here's something I can recommend,' says he, 'and here's a wee thing might take your fancy.' But, though James liked this and that, Mary couldn't be satisfied. She wanted something better or something handier or something more useful, and Graham, being a good hearted man and knowing Mary well and the trouble she had, humored her all he could—brought out watches and rings and knives and spoons till the counter was thick before her. 'Would this do,' says Graham, 'or would this?' 'No,' says Mary; 'it won't.' At last she settles on a silver locket, that being her



Half the town was there to see.

woman's way, hands it to James, puts down 5 shillings to pay for it and then, just as Graham stoops to open the till, slips a watch from the counter behind her, says the sergeant, and walks out. In a second the thing was done, and there the two were out again on the pavement.

"Well, sir, half an hour afterward, be the time more or less, Mary and James were sitting with a few friends in Mangan's parlor over a farewell drink when the sergeant of police comes to the door, crooks his finger at James and asks the favor of a word with him. It was just this way the sergeant when the two were face to face on the pavement—a robbery had been committed in Graham's shop.

"Well," says James, stiffening his back. 'Half an hour ago, the sergeant goes on, a watch was taken from Graham's counter. 'Well,' says James again, with a snort. He made no accusations, but he was wishful to avoid a scene; but, says the sergeant, suspicion was heavy upon Mary and—

"On Mary," says James. 'Ye say that? Ye dare to stand there an' say—that? I tell you only what's told to myself. Now, like a good man,' says he, laying a hand on James' shoulder, 'have wit and do as I tell you. Go and bring her to the barracks till I have a word with her. If she's innocent—'

"Not one danged foot," shouts James—"not one foot I'll bring her!"

"Then I must do my duty," says the sergeant.

"Do it," shouts James in a fury, 'an' when yer duty's done I'll do mine, for I'll have yer black blood!'

"By this crowd had gathered on the sidewalk, and when, in a minute, the sergeant came leading Mary by the arm half the town was there to see. I was there myself. I saw Mary, and I saw James, and I followed them down to the barracks door. Mary went meek as a lamb, the child in her arm, and her eyes fixed before her, and her face white as a sheet. Behind her went James, cursing like a trooper and vowing murder upon the sergeant, and behind him the three and in front was all the world, foolish with excitement. To the very barracks I followed them, with pity soft in my heart, and saw the door close behind them, and for twenty minutes I waited on the sidewalk till the door opened again and Mary came out, her face streaming with tears, a big burman on her cheek, the child still in her arms and no James with her."

Dan paused just there and sat looking at his empty glass, but I leaped to ward him. "No James," said I.

"No," answered Dan. "There was no James. When Mary was searched, nothing was found on her, so she turns to the sergeant and says, 'Now, maybe ye'll be accusin' James next!'

"Aye," shouts James, says, 'maybe ye will! Search me, he shouts—'search me before I spill yer blood! So they searched him, and there in his coat pocket was the watch. Aye, there it was, sir, with every hour of the day marked upon its face."

A light broke upon me. "Mary put it there!" cried I.

"To be sure," answered Dan—"to be sure she did. Sooner than have James go to the war she'd make him a thief and have him tried and sent to jail. Aye, that's what she'd do." Again Dan paused, sighed deeply and went on: "Ah, God help her innocence," said he, with all fervor, "and God keep her and send James back to her! Her trial was sore; her lot is hard. She did her best—she did her best. It was foolish and mad of her, but 'twas the best she could do. And all of us, no mortal use in the world, for next day, before the magistrates, the whole story came out, and James was dismissed and Mary reprimanded. And there she is now, trudging home through the mists to her lonely hearth, with James gone from her, and bitter days before her, and the heart dead within her. Dead, did I say? Well, maybe not, for didn't James forgive her in the end, and hadn't she something of his to comfort her for many a day—the bruise on her cheek that he gave her in the barrack when he turned and looked at her and guessed what she'd done?"

CONSTANTINOPLE.

It Has Perhaps the Finest Site for a City in the World.

Constantinople looks much better from the water than it does when viewed ashore. The tourist who touches at the port, remains on board and sees the city only from the sea retains an entirely different impression. It is from him who goes ashore. Seen from the water, Constantinople is very beautiful. Seen from the shore, it is the apotheosis of everything that is filthy and foul. I do not say that it is unworthy of a visit, but I do say that he who stays on board will take away a much more picturesque impression.

The site of Constantinople is ideal. There is probably no finer site for a city in the world. It is situated on the Bosphorus, between the Mediterranean and the Black seas. It lies between Europe and Asia, for Scutari is part of Constantinople, and Scutari is on the Asiatic shore. It is cut off by natural boundaries into municipal divisions, for the Golden Horn divides Scutari, the Mohammedan, from Galata, the Christian city. So the Bosphorus divides Scutari from the Asiatic, from Constantinople, the European, city; yet all of these places make one great city under the general name of Constantinople. And this great city is guarded also by nature. It has the sea of Marmora close at hand, with fortifications at either end of this great water highway, rendering the city unassailable by sea. It has the Bosphorus, the straits which also renders it, properly fortified, impregnable by land as well as by sea. It is as if San Francisco were to have batteries of heavy artillery all around her water front, from India basin to the presidio, from the presidio to Lake Merced and then across the neck of the peninsula from Lake Merced to India basin. With all these factors in its favor no wonder that Constantinople has always been looked upon as an ideal site for a city. That so many races should have battled over these places makes one great city under the general name of Constantinople. And this great city is guarded also by nature. It has the sea of Marmora close at hand, with fortifications at either end of this great water highway, rendering the city unassailable by sea. It has the Bosphorus, the straits which also renders it, properly fortified, impregnable by land as well as by sea. 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