JESSIE'S HERO.

From People's Home Journal.

CHAPTER II.

"One victory for Will Enderly. He has the kindest heart, at least. I wish he shared my seat instead of Tom. If he but proves as brave as he is kind, why, then—"

Even in her heart she did not finish that sentence. But there was a lovely light in her eye as it beamed upon Will, in return for his salutation, which made his heart beat rapidly with hope.

A few days later, Jessie had a chance to test the courage of both her lovers. About five miles from Springdale there was a wild, beautiful spot, known as Fern Glen, where picnic parties often resorted; and here Jessie and her two suitors, with a merry party, had gathered.

They had enjoyed an abundant dinner, spread upon the fresh green grass, and were rambling about in groups, upon the rocky cliffs around the glen, gathering wild flowers and rare specimens of beautiful ferns from which the glen derived its name, when Jessie's chance came.

She was gathering a splendid fern, which grew very near the edge of a high, rough cliff, when, chancing to look over the gorge, she spied a magnificent scarlet flower growing below.

"Oh, how beautiful!" she cried. "I never saw one like it. I must and will have that flower."

The rest of the group gathered near to look over. "I don't think you'll get it, Jess," said Molly Freeman, coolly. "No one would be likely to go down there for the sake of a mere flower."

"But they will for my sake," cried Jessie. A wilful spirit seemed to take possession of her, as she thought: "Now is the chance to test them." And then aloud she added: "There, gentlemen, is a challenge for you. Who is brave enough to go down the gorge and bring me that flower?"

Two or three young men looked over the cliff, and shook their heads. The risk was too great; they would not dare it. But Jessie was determined. Turning to Will Enderly, she said:

"Come, Mr. Enderly, you will do my bidding, I know! Get me the scarlet flower, please."

Will looked grave, as he answered:

"No, Miss Jessie. I cannot risk my life for such a trifle. Surely you do not wish it?"

"But I do wish it," cried Jessie, decidedly. "I say I command it."

"I cannot obey," was the firm answer.

"What? Are you afraid to go down?" asked Jessie, tauntingly, her pretty cheeks all aflame.

Will turned paler, but he said quietly:

"Yes, for so small a cause, I am."

"What? You a coward?" And Jessie's voice rang loud and clear. "Go this moment, or I will never speak to you again, Will Enderly!"

"Then, farewell. I will not go," was the answer. And deadly white, with folded arms, Will walked away.

Tom Marshall stepped forward, and began to throw off his coat. "Miss Jessie, I'll go down and get the flower," he said.

"Oh, Jessie, don't let him!" cried two or three of the girls. "It is too dangerous. Don't let him! It would be cruel!"

Jessie drew herself up proudly.

"Don't be alarmed; I am not an ogress," she said. "I do not want the flower. I would not have it now, if it grew at my feet. I wanted to find out who was the brave man, and who the coward. And I have found out. Mr. Marshall, put on your coat. It is enough that you were willing to dare the danger for my sake."

Will was not too far off to hear every word Jessie had spoken. She had raised her voice on purpose that he might hear, and she knew her taunts had stung deeply, as she meant they should. She walked away on Tom's arm, and he was proud of his victory now. Indeed, he had guessed her intention all the time. He never really meant to descend that dangerous cliff. But he knew Jessie Lincoln, and felt sure if he offered to go she would forbid it, as she did, and he would have the honors of a bloodless battle.

The little incident was soon forgotten, except by the three concerned. Will wandered moodily around alone, and, whenever Jessie and Tom passed him, she would not glance at him, much less speak to him.

The hour for going home had nearly arrived. Some of the party were already descending the cliff by the long path to the glen, others were yet upon the plateau at the top, when a wild shriek was heard by those below, followed by cries of "Help! help! help!"

"What is it? What's the matter?" was the eager question. And the thrilling answer came: "John Freeman has fallen over. He is caught on a limb half way down. What shall we do? Who can save him? He can't hold on long, and he'll be killed."

Cautiously holding each other back, they all peeped over the fearful cliff. There, indeed, hung poor John, caught upon a jagged limb, to which he clung, midway down the dreadful gorge. And his cries of "Help! help!" were coming up fainter and fainter, and his strength diminished.

But he could not be left there to die. Someone surely would go down. Who should it be?

"Tom! Tom Marshall! Tom will go!" cried several voices. "Where is Tom?"

But Tom, after one look, drew back, pale and trembling.

"I couldn't," he said. "No man could, and live to return."

"You told Jessie you'd go," cried John's cousin, Mollie Freeman, through her sobs.

"I knew she didn't mean it," said Tom, flushing fiery red. "I can't go. I dare not."

"Stand back there," cried a firm voice, as Will Enderly stepped to the edge of the cliff. "I'm going down."

"Not you!" exclaimed Jessie, who stood close beside him. "You know you cannot!"

"Stand back, I say!" was Will's answer, so sternly given that Jessie shrank back, utterly abashed. Without even giving her a glance, Will threw off his coat and his shoes. The others, recognizing the master-spirit, watched his motions in silence.

"Bring the rope from the sail here, quick!" he ordered. And, while strong youths flew to do his bidding, he threw himself down upon the ground, reached his head over the gorge, and shouted, cheerily:

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Heart Failure.

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