

The Battle of Bull's Run

By Judith Spencer

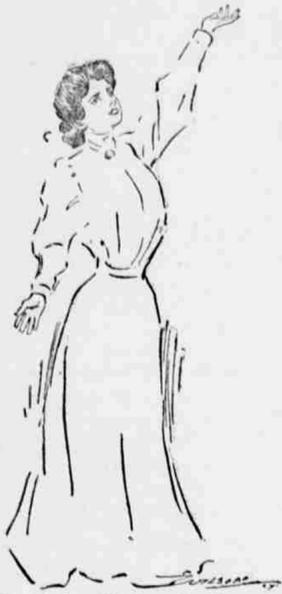
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Nerissa was alone in the cemetery. And as her scarlet gown gleamed out from amid the luxuriant foliage she looked for all the world like some gorgeous flower. The other members of the household, young and old, had gone to hear the Fourth of July oration down on the village green. Nerissa, too, had meant to be there—for she was full of patriotic ardor—but as she had driven through the village that morning she had caught sight of Robert Lea, who was back in town for the first time since his mother's recent death. And it was to avoid a possible meeting with him that she had stayed away.

But now the thought had come to her—suppose, when he found she was not there with her people, he should deliberately seek her here? He was quite capable of doing so—she remembered well his determined, square-cut jaw—even though he had proved himself a coward!

The thought made her uneasy. For Nerissa despised Robert Lea, and did not wish to speak to him—ever again.

Though she did not see him, the click of the gate forewarned her; then some one spoke her name and she looked up without surprise to see Robert Lea standing by her side.



"I Tell You All, He is the Bravest of the Brave!"

"Oh, you!" she said, with scorn, and bent over the roses.

"Poor Jim," said Robert, ignoring her slighting manner. "It is hard to realize the boy is dead—"

"He was a hero!" Nerissa said with conviction.

A vision of the reckless, irresponsible lad, whom both had known from his childhood, rose before the young man.

"At least he was brave," he said. "I know how you admire bravery—"

"And despise a coward!" she flashed.

At that the man's cheek flushed. For he and Nerissa had been engaged to be married when the war with Spain broke out. But when Robert Lea had resigned from his company instead of taking the field with the volunteers, Nerissa had listened to no reason or excuse, and openly denouncing him as "unpatriotic" and "a coward," she had broken her engagement and had had nothing to do with him since that day.

"You do not understand," he said slowly, "that it may take more courage to stay at home than to face an enemy in battle—or that one might be called upon to sacrifice even the flag for some nearer duty—"

"I can understand no excuse whatever," Nerissa said. "And I do not see why you should seek me out to offer one at this late day!"

"I do not," he replied. "I acted as I did because I thought I was doing right. I did not dream that it would separate us, because I thought you loved me as truly as I loved you, and as—unluckily for me—I love you still! I believed you would understand. And yet had I known beforehand what the end would be, I should have acted exactly as I did. But there was one, thank God, who did understand!"

Then to Nerissa, looking up at him coldly and without sympathy, these words came all unbidden, and supplied the key to his motives, which she had never sought nor desired: "The only son of his mother, and she a widow."

"I have come to you now only to say good-by," he was saying quietly. "As long as my mother lived my place was here with her. But now—I am free to go. And I am here to-day to bid you good-by forever."

While he was speaking there came a curious sound from behind him, the peculiar snort and snuffle of some animal, and he glanced quickly over his shoulder to see what it could be.

Nerissa saw his face stiffen with horror, and swiftly following his glance, she saw a powerful bull approaching with rapid steps, tossing his great head and rolling his glaring eyes.

"Good heavens, your scarlet gown!" muttered Robert, in dismay. "Run, Nerissa! Get over the nearest wall

and out of sight in the bushes—but run now—for your life!"

As she sprang to her feet, with her limbs trembling under her in a panic of sudden fear, Robert Lea snatched a flag from his dead companion's grave and stopped forward, placing himself between her and the ugly brute.

With a smothered sob, Nerissa gathered up her skirts and ran, the fellow of the bull filling her ears. Her flying feet found uncertain footing among the uneven mounds, and before she had gone far she stumbled and fell in a scarlet heap, with her ankle so twisted under her that she was utterly unable to rise. She heard a sharp outcry as she went down, and in horror she thought, "He has met his death!"

But his cry had been for her—not for himself—and when she dared look around she saw that Robert had turned the great animal, and was fencing with him, flouting the flag in his face—and ever retreating before him with the wiles and caution of an experienced bull-fighter—was enticing the beast on and on in the opposite direction from where she lay.

One misstep on that uneven ground would mean certain and awful death, and he knew it; yet he never swerved or faltered. Unarmed, agile, wary, full of nerve and perfectly fearless—this was the man she had openly denounced as a coward!

But what had happened now? Had blind terror seized him at last? For as he freed himself from the labyrinth of paths and swelling mounds, and gained the level drive, Robert suddenly turned his back on the bull and sprang forward—running as if for his life—while the animal, with head down, plunged after him, bellowing and gaining upon him at every step. And so they passed, in an ugly vision, out through the gate and from Nerissa's sight.

The next she knew the gate was shut, and Robert was hastening toward her, breathless, empty-handed and unharmed!

"Nerissa, are you hurt?" he cried, bending over her where she lay in a huddled heap.

She was very pale and was trembling pitifully, and now she began to sob quietly.

"It's nothing—only my ankle—I can't move—but it doesn't matter. I was so afraid—"

"Yes, I know," he panted, as he lifted her into an easier position; "but there's no danger now—no, none at all!" for she was clinging to his hand like a child who is still afraid. But she hid her face, as if refusing to be comforted.

"Oh—after that first mad moment I was not afraid—for myself," she sobbed at last. "It was for you—but you feared nothing, I could see that—and I had dared call you a coward! It was the bravest thing I ever knew—"

He looked down at her with a surprised and puzzled smile, for how can a mere man ever hope to gauge a girl's estimate of his actions?

A short distance beyond the cemetery Nerissa saw an ox-cart, and asked to be taken home in that.

So a bargain was made and soon Nerissa was enthroned on a couch of hay.

"But—won't you ride, too?" she said.

"No, I will walk alongside."

"Please ride; I want you—beside me," she murmured, and Robert, with a new light in his eyes, climbed in.

He carried her again from the ox-cart to the house. And then, for he was a physician, and it was Nerissa's request that he should do so, he bandaged up the aching ankle.

Then once more he stood before her and said "good-by."

"But—why must you go away—now?" Nerissa asked, nervously, as she realized that in the amends she wished to make she was to have no help.

"Because my arrangements are all made and my word is given. I go to start my life afresh in a new place. It is too late to change my mind now—even if I wished to do so," he said. "Did you think I would care to stay here—permanently—after what had occurred?"

"No—I suppose not," she admitted wistfully; "still—I am sorry." Then, holding fast by the remembrance that he had that day declared he loved her still, she shut her eyes and added, desperately: "Robert, tell me this: when you gave them your word you would go—did you promise you would go—alone?"

The news of Nerissa's reengagement to Robert Lea, and that she was going away to begin life with him in a western town, came like a thunder-bolt to Nerissa's family and friends.

"Well, Rob is a splendid fellow, and we always said so, but we thought you thought him a coward?" they said.

"On the contrary, I know him to be a brave man," said Nerissa.

"Yes, for he has that grand sort of moral courage which would make him hold to his own conviction of right against all the world—but still—"

"He has not only that courage, but the other sort as well! He has faced death upon the field—and proved his courage!"

"Now, Nerissa, what on earth are you talking about?"

"I am talking about—the battle of Bull's Run!" said Nerissa, solemnly.

"Where I saw Robert Lea—the standard bearer—facing the enemy and awful, almost certain death, and he bore himself like a hero—he never flinched! I tell you all, he is the bravest of the brave!"

At that they gasped and shrugged their shoulders, and declared that Nerissa certainly had gone crazy!

Whereupon Nerissa held her peace and smiled in sweet content.

A JEALOUS WIFE

By Adele E. Thompson

(Copyright.)

"Helen, dear, I have something to tell you."

"Yes, Robert," and though the boy trembled a little, unseen by him, the voice was bravely cheerful, "I think I can guess what it is."

"Can you?" and the happy look on the boyish face, such a boyish face still for all his 26 years, grew still brighter. "Of course, I have written you about Lillian, the dearest girl in the world; but it seems so wonderful to think that she loves me as dearly as I do her, and I wanted you to be the first to hear it," and Helen listened while he sang a lover's praises, and smiling, hid the little pain in her heart that would come with the realization that this only brother had found one nearer than herself.

"There have always been two of us," he concluded, "you and I; but now there will be three, Lillian, you and I."

"No, Robert," she said, even more cheerfully than before, "there will be two still, Lillian and you."

"Nonsense, Helen," he protested, hotly. "Nobody is ever going to crowd you out; we have come too near each other for that. When I come to tell Lillian all you have been to me, mother and sister, both, and all I owe to you through these years, I know that she will love you as well as I do."

Helen smiled a little dubiously; she could not say to him that some one else would have opinions and a voice concerning the home; and she had no desire by look or word to mar the few hours they were to have together after an absence of months.

Helen did not come for the wedding; but after they were settled in



"What Has Come Between Us So?"

their home, yielding to Robert's repeated letters, she went on for a visit. Lillian received her with sweet frostiness, so subtle as to be felt rather than observed.

Robert had built such hopes on the results of this visit, but somehow, if he began to talk to Helen of the days when they two were alone in the world together, Lillian was apt to develop a headache that shut her up in her room; and if Helen petted him in her old loving way, Lillian would show her displeasure by punishing him with a cold if not sulky silence, that made the household atmosphere anything but cheering.

Helen's visit was but short, and at its end it is hard to say which of the trio was the most relieved. "Robert"—he was standing beside Helen on the platform waiting for her train—"you know how gladly I would be a sister to Lillian if she needed me, if she would let me."

"Yes, I know," he answered, with a feeling that was half chagrin and half perplexity; "but Lillian is so jealously fond of me now; she will get over that by and by."

In time another guest came into the home. "I'm sorry," Lillian said weakly as Robert bent over her and the other, the tiny head, "that it isn't a boy. They say that sometimes men love a daughter better than their wife; but it would break my heart if you should love the baby best. Promise me that you never will!"

"What a foolish Lillian," he answered; "of course I never will." When it came to naming the baby he had his way. "There never can be but one Lillian to me, so Helen it shall be," and he wrote "Aunt Helen" wonderful stories of the beauty and brightness of Baby Nellie.

After a little he began to catch a note, a something, between the lines in Helen's letters that vaguely troubled him, and one day there came a letter in a hand so changed he hardly knew it; she was sick, would he come to her?

Lillian was in her room with a cold and slight fever when he carried the letter to her. "Surely you are not going to leave me here sick," she exclaimed. "How can you be so cruel! If Helen is very badly off she could not have written herself. Well, if you go, only wait till morning; half a day won't make any difference to her."

Robert hesitated, he felt impelled to go at once; but if he crossed Lillian, it might make her so much worse that he could not go at all.

In the morning, as he was stepping on the train, a telegram was handed him—"Helen is dying."

"You are too late"—he felt the re-echoing accent in the nurse's tone—"and she was so anxious to see you."

Lillian wrote him a letter full of love and sympathy; she said to everyone: "Dear Helen, how sad it is." At the same time down in her heart there was a little feeling that she never put into words or even concrete thought—now he is wholly mine.

But not entirely hers; there was the little Helen. And as the child grew beyond the years when she could conveniently be put to sleep or sent to the nursery, loving, lovable, always ready to spring into her father's arms, the hateful root in Lillian's heart took a fresh start. Every caress he gave to Nellie and every word that spoke of her, every word that would rob her of her right; to herself she said she could not bear it, that her own child should come between them, and at times she almost hated the child for it.

One day there was white crapes on the door, and a white casket was carried out of their home.

Lillian shed many tears, she felt the keen sting of grief; but yet deep down, far deeper than Helen's death, lay the thought that she would hardly have owned to herself, but was none the less present, that now, for the first time, Robert was hers alone, no longer was there right or claim beside.

And yet, impalpable as the thinnest breath of vapor, not to be grasped or defined, but none the less present and felt, was the shadowy something that seemed to have come between her and Robert in the hour when she could claim him as hers, and hers only. At first she recognized this with an incredulous petulance that in turn gave place to a vague alarm. Not that he was less tenderly kind or attentive—the more so, if anything; but he went his way as if no longer touched by her moods; frequently he said he had writing to do, and shut himself in the little room that had been Nellie's play-room, now made into a "den." It almost seemed; but then it could not be that he was living a life of his own apart from her.

At last one evening petulance and alarm flamed into speech, and as he was leaving the room on the plea of "writing a little while," she threw herself before him. "Robert," she cried, holding him fast, "what is it? What has come between us so? What are you doing?"

"I am writing on the book you have often heard me speak of," answering the last of her questions.

"But I don't want you to write that book; I hate it," the tears beginning to gather. "You are so changed to me, and now for that to come in. You have never been the same since Nellie died; I always knew you loved her the best; I wish I could have died instead of her. You never loved me, or you would not make me so miserable."

"Lillian," and there was a note in his voice she had never heard before, "I married you because I loved you; I have loved you always; I love you now. You are sweet and true at heart. The trouble has been that you wanted and exacted of me what I did not ask of you, what no one has a right to demand of another, my whole and only love. Love is like a fountain, the more freely and in larger measure it flows, the purer and fuller it is; choke it up, and it either diminishes or becomes unhealthy. This, your selfish jealousy—forgive me if I speak plainly—has done for both of us. Because of it you hardened your heart to Helen, who would gladly have loved you, and loving whom would have made your own life the richer, and led me to weakly fall in the gratitude and devotion I owed to her; because of it you were an untender mother to Nellie; you neither gave her your own love nor allowed me to show her mine, for the lack of which her whole young life was clouded."

"Do not think that I blame you alone for this; I blame myself even more, that seeing it I weakly yielded, that I was not strong enough, clear-sighted enough, to have crushed it for you as you would not for yourself; but as it is, it has spoiled my home and marred my happiness and filled my heart with remorseful memories. You say that I have changed to you since Nellie died. It is because I have thought of these things since then as I never did before, and have come to some conclusions that it were well for both of us had I done so long ago. In the future I shall give to you, as I have always had it in my heart to do, the best of my love and confidence and care; but at the same time I shall remember that I have my own life to live, and give to its duties and claims what I feel they deserve. You ask me, Lillian, what has come between us? It is the only thing that ever could have come—yourself."

She had loosed her hold on him and dropped into a chair; he bent and gently kissed her and left the room. For once Lillian's usual flow of words failed her. If there had been a trace of passion in his tone—but there was none—it was the pitiless calmness of his words that had chilled her heart as with an icy touch. Heavy draperies at the windows shut out the wintry storm outside; in the grate the fire glowed red; warmth and light were all about her; but she shivered in their midst. And this was her Robert, who had used his words with it, seemed to her, as little of ruth as an executioner's sword. Listening, she followed his steps as they passed up the stairs; then the door of his study closed, and its sharp click to her echoed: "What has come between us? It is—yourself."

Pleased the Newspaper Men.

Mr. Bonaparte was explaining that he had two good reasons why he could not give his caller the information he had asked for. "One is that I have not yet got the information myself," he said in his characteristic way, "and the other way is that when I do get it I will try to keep it away from the eagles of the press." "Eagles of the press,—that's very handsome of you, Mr. Bonaparte," said his caller, who was a newspaper man. "There are those who have another name." "There are those who have another name," said the attorney general. "Vultures," I think I have heard them say. But my experience with the newspaper men has always been of the pleasantest kind, and I prefer to think of them as eagles, not vultures."

SISTER NOT WANTED THERE.

Washington Boy Satisfied with the Present Arrangement.

"I've got three brothers and myself," said a six-year-old boy one day last week to a male caller at his home in Washington, during a little talk about playmates, toys and boom-complions. The caller was a bosom friend of the youngster's father and was waiting for the latter to join him on a trip downtown.

"Four boys, eh?" commented the father's friend.

"Yes, Tom, that's me, Jim an' Fred an' Len. Girls might be all right; I like 'em, too, most of the time, but they're sassy and always afraid of getting hurt. Can't play ball, nor shoot marbles, and the only thing some of 'em can do is skate," prattled the boy.

"So you don't think you'd like to have a sister?"

"None," replied Tom after a pause. "But suppose the Lord gave you a sister, you would have to have her, wouldn't you?"

Tom looked about the room for several moments and the casting his big eyes on his inquisitor in a frightened sort of way, suddenly darted out of the room and made for the stairway. "Where are you going, boy?" called the man.

"To the nursery," came the reply as Tom's legs carried him as fast as they could up the stairs. In about ten minutes he returned to the room again perfectly placid, and, placing himself squarely before the man, hesitated a moment. "Mr. Smith, me and the boys don't want a sister," he said.

"But, suppose God had just left one here for you, what then?"

"Well, I wouldn't a-been her, Fred wouldn't a-been her, Lou wouldn't a-been her and Jim wouldn't a-been her. Now, who'd a-been her?"

FROCK COATS IN CONGRESS.

Garment Going Out of Fashion Among Modern Statesmen.

Congress is eliminating the frock coat habit. More than half the members of the new congress have shown their disapproval of the time-honored costume by appearing on the floor of the house in the regulation business suit of tweed. Red and lavender neckties can poll a larger vote than the somber black string tie, and old members, loyal to the frock coat and its accessories, are discussing with despair the future of congressional tan shoes.

These sartorial belligerents declare that the revolt against the unwritten law concerning the frock coat habit is chiefly in the interest of comfort. Whether the regulation statesman's garb would be a matter of pride with them in questioning whether they would appear to better personal advantage in solemn black or most becoming blue, they insist, is a matter of secondary consideration.

Fear expressed by members of the house for the doom of the frock coat has already disturbed the equanimity of the senate by the appearance of a couple of belligerents in the ranks of this black-coated body.

Allie James of Kentucky, the heavy weight of the house, who weighs nearly 300 pounds, says the habit of wearing light tan and gray sack coat suits is not a matter of choice. It is a necessity, he says, because he never found a tailor who had cloth enough of one kind to make him a frock coat suit.

One Use for Billboards.

"Billboards may be a horrible blot on civic beauty," said a well-known Washington business man the other day, "but they have their uses."

"Impossible!" said a disgusted artist. "Impossible!"

"But I tell you they have their benefits," insisted the man. "I know it."

"Oh, I don't see how," said the disgruntled artist, recalling memories of many wars waged by his colleagues and civic improvement societies on the billboard.

"I got my elementary education from them," said the business man. "I learned the alphabet from them."

"Well, of all things," said the artist. "Yes, when I was a small tad I used to drive about the city a good deal with my father, who was a physician. I used to love to follow the sign boards, especially the illustrated ones. By studying them closely I learned my letters and would spell out the words."

"One evening father said Bob must begin to think about going to school. I said: 'Why, father, why should I go to school? I can read.' I ran and got a newspaper and read one of the long stories before receiving any comments. Of course my pronunciation would never have won me a blue ribbon in a reading match; in fact, I guess, from all I can learn since, it was pretty awful. But I could read, and that's why I say I got my first start in education from the billboards."

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