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Contest and Conquest.

A STORY OF SOUTHERN LIFE.

BY LELIA LEE.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Unusually good luck in the way of angling had, on the afternoon of our heroine's mishap, detained our friends Ralph and Walter later than they would otherwise have lingered at the fishing ground, which was a small creek emptying into the Potomac about half a mile above Oaklands. With all a sportsman's delight they had kept up the fascinating business until the dark shades thrown upon the stream warned them that the sun was sinking, and at length very reluctantly they wound up their lines, &c., and a few swift strokes of the paddles sent the little boat gliding homeward on the river's broad breast. Long, cool shadows—little mirrored landscapes and floating isles of green, glossy water plants lay upon the river's surface, while only the plash of the minaudering waves and the twitter of birds broke the stillness which reigned all around them. At first the sportsmen had kept up a lively conversation in reference to the long strings of shining victims which bore good evidence of their prowess as anglers, but soon they exhausted the subject apparently, or to bring the image of Cora Deane and lovely secrets about Cora must have caused a lull in their animated discourse, for they fell into a long silence, and only the dip of the lightly handled paddles broke the presence of the little boat so full of companions.

In this manner they had glided silently along and arrived within a few hundred yards of the landing just in front of Oaklands. The banks of the river in this place were so steep and precipitous, that they slipped down upon one side, leaving the river bank at the landing but a few feet elevated above the surface of the water, and our two young sportsmen had just arrived at the point where, on this side, this elevation in the height of the bank commenced, and Walter, in anticipation of an early spring in form from, had dropped his paddle and in a trice [illegible] and gathering up the fish and [illegible] when a quick exclamation from Ralph's part stopped him, and, with an again [illegible] his position, he sat with an inquiring face fastened on his boy.

"Did you hear voices up there, Walter?" asked Ralph, pointing as he spoke to the bank which was here some twenty feet above them.

"No; but I heard something like the chuckle of a mean or beast," responded Walter. "Some of the negroes, I guess, after truck."

"The cattle pens are not on this side of the estate, and so a cow can't be here," replied Ralph.

Ralph had also ceased paddling on his observation, and he was, as the ripples from the dripping oars in the water had gone, an ear directed toward the bank above them. Suddenly a shrill, evoked voice rang out on the still evening air, [illegible] Ralph, unmindful of [illegible] allowed the sound of [illegible] foot toward the river, [illegible] a powerful [illegible] a female form on his [illegible] upon the [illegible] with [illegible] swift, lingering [illegible] for a moment on the [illegible] scream—one [illegible] Ralph Essie's identity, [illegible] the third or [illegible] well known tones of his heart, she disappeared from sight beneath the [illegible] bank.

"Great God!" exclaimed Ralph, as he turned a [illegible] pale face toward Walter. "That was Essie. What can it all mean?"

"Essie," mechanically repeated Walter, who, not having his senses sharpened by love's touch, had failed to recognize her as did Ralph, "Impossible!"

Ralph's eyes were fastened eagerly upon the surface of the water, and without once removing his gaze therefrom, he went on in a quick, excited tone, as he poised his paddle ready for a stroke:

"The instant they rise, pull toward them that we may rescue them."

Hardly had he ceased speaking, when, with lightning speed, the paddle struck the water, impelled by his strong hand, and the boat shot toward a struggling mass which his quick eye discovered on the surface of the water a short distance from the boat.

He only reached the spot to see the white, beautiful face of the woman he so passionately loved sink again from his sight, and in frantic agony he had risen to leap over the side of the boat, when the voice of Walter arrested him.

"Stay, stay! they will rise again and closer to us next time; you can and her far better here than in the water."

Struck by this sound reasoning of his friend, Ralph did stop, but oh! what an age of agony did it seem to him ere the white face again gleamed upon the dark water's breast, and he by a quick, prompt movement gained the spot and caught the golden wreath of silken hair which floated out like a soft bronze cloud upon the water as the lovely face of its owner was sinking for the last time from the eyes of her agonized lover. Retaining only a sufficient hold upon her long tresses to bear her near enough, our hero grasped the senseless form of our heroine and attempted to draw her into the boat, but to his horror he found that her captor, as yet unknown to him, still had the slight form grasped firmly in his arms, and all his force was not sufficient to disengage his idolized one from the firm, cruel clasp.

"Strike the brute loose, Walter," he cried out passionately. "In God's name, don't you see he'll drown her?"

Instantly Seaton's paddle was raised and in another moment would have descended on the man in the water, when, by a sudden struggle or turn, his face was revealed to Ralph, and he recognized the old friend of his father, Dr. Walworth.

"Hold!" he shouted to Seaton, and as the latter paused in surprise, Ralph continued as though a sudden thought had just struck him:

"I'll hold *her* above the water—make for the landing as fast as you can and we may save both. That is Dr. Walworth holding her."

In sing Essie's head and shoulders as much as possible above the water, our hero braced his feet firmly against the sides of the boat, and Walter, exerting every energy, sent the little boat swiftly towards the landing, which, being so close by fortunately, was soon reached, and then by their united efforts the two half drowned forms were drawn with great difficulty upon the shore. Essie, utterly unconscious, was still clasped tightly in the fearful grasp of the maniac, and it required all their united strength to wrench his hold loose. Neither showed the least sign of life, and Ralph, nearly frantic with fear, caught up Essie's insensible form and almost ran with her up the long avenue to the mansion.

Meeting Mr. Moreland at the front door, he requested him to go with two men instantly to the landing, and then, without stopping for a word of explanation to the astonished man, went swiftly on with his unconscious burden to the drawing room, and gently placing her upon a sofa, summoned Mrs. Moreland and the servants.

Great was the alarm and consternation of the good hostess, and of the whole household, upon learning Essie's condition, and it was long ere the most prompt and strenuous efforts succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. But at length, after what seemed an age of suspense, animation was restored, and Ralph, who had hung about her like one bereft of reason during the painful season of suspense, could scarcely suppress his joy and delight at seeing once more the brown eyes of her he so fondly loved unclose and wander languidly from one to another of the faces bending anxiously above her. As soon as her condition permitted, Mrs Moreland and Floy suggested the necessity of getting her in her own room, and it was Ralph's strong arms that carried her and laid her on the bed. Only once did the brown eyes open when he gathered her close to his heart, and then meeting his eyes fixed upon her with a world of joy and love shining from them, her own closed again while a flush like the heart of an apple blossom spread all over face and neck.

A few moments sufficed after Ralph's departure for Mrs. Moreland and Floy to dispose of our heroine, and she was soon snugly ensconced in bed and asleep, the constant excitement of mind under which she had of late labored added to her late peril and struggles in the water having completely exhausted her physically.

Meantime Dr. Walworth had been receiving like attention from the hands of Mr Seaton, Mr. Moreland and some of the servants, and, on Ralph's return down stairs, he found the physician not only "brought to," but commencing to give proofs, by his wild language and violent struggles, that he was in one of his dreadful fits of insanity. While the gentleman were all debating the best disposition to be made of him, their doubts were fortunately relieved by the coming of two men, well known to Mr. Moreland as the individuals kept by the unfortunate man as his guards at such times, who were in search of the Doctor and much alarmed at not being able to find him. They informed his rescuers that the attack had come on him on the afternoon previous, and that in some manner he had about two hours previous escaped their vigilance and disappeared. Mr. Moreland's carriage was placed at their disposal, and the unfortunate man who had come so near causing a double death was conveyed home to the infinite relief of his friends.

The information gained from the keepers rendered clear the mystery of Dr. Walworth's act, but no one could account for his meeting with Essie, and so until morning should find her refreshed sufficiently to give particulars, all were forced to content themselves with surmises.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The next morning gave to all the desired particulars, and found Essie much better than any dared hope after so narrow an escape from death, and she declared herself fully able to get up for breakfast, but to this Mrs. Moreland would not listen, bidding her remain in bed at least until afternoon, but, as noon approached, our invalid plead so hard for release that she was permitted to go down in the drawing room, and have, at the suggestion of Ralph, her dinner served beside her sofa on a little stand, and arranged on a most beautiful little invalid set of china, which was of itself a temptation. Essie laughingly declared they were all conspiring to make an invalid of her *nolens volens*, and protested against so much unnecessary trouble, but her expostulations were overruled, and besides it was quite impossible for our heroine, notwithstanding her stern resolutions of the evening before, to resist the sweet thrill of grateful love which agitated her heart on being thus the recipient of such tender care and attention from Ralph. "It is not for long," whispered the sad heart to itself. "Only for a little moment let me bask in the beautiful light of this sweet dream; for a brief space let me draw about myself this beautiful, golden threaded veil of fancy and see how glorious are the tints imparted by its rainbow meshes to the sombre future; only a little while and then," prompted that pleading heart with a sigh, "we will fold tenderly away this gossamer veil, this net work of brilliant hopes and dreams and lay it among the fair, faded contents of that great darkened corridor opening from every heart of earth at whose entrance is woven, in yew and cypress the words, "Might have been!"

Ah, Essie! sweet, patient, young voyager on life's "thorn-strewn way." It seemed to you then, as it hath seemed to many another heart on earth, so bitter, so hard to put aside that brilliant veil of young hopes and dreams; to consign it, just at it seemed ready to envelope your life, into this dim corridor of the hearts of earth—this sepulchre of night have been, but that corridor hath still another entrance; one entrance we see, the other one openeth up in the beyond, and one day, standing amid the far stretching glories of the other shore, we shall look again into that corridor; shall see once more all the beautiful, enticing shapes which were so dear to us, and which it pained us so to lay away in that dim receptacle, but oh! not as *then* will we behold them. They will reappear to us, not as the beautiful, flower-wreathed delusions we regretfully laid there, but a Father's hand shall show them to us stripped of their delusive decorations and standing out clearly before us—black, piercing thorns and festering evils which His tender, watchful love removed from our lives, that in this great day of unveiling our rebellious hearts taught unhesitating acknowledgment of that which His ministers and works ever teach us, "He doth all things well."

And so, under the shadow—in the twilight that veil cast by a kind God over our earthly vision, did this life-hope, this dream of "young love" appear to our fair heroine, and bitter, indeed as death almost was the task she undertook that afternoon. The duty and necessity as she saw it so gently, but firmly refusing the rich wealth of love which was offered her in that summer's twilight by the man who was king of her young heart's deepest, purest affections. It was so hard to turn from his passionate pleadings—so hard to relinquish the beautiful picture his lips, made doubly eloquent by love, drew of her future as his loved, cherished wife, and yet hard as it seemed, devotedly as she loved him, she had strength granted her to pursue what she deemed the right path. In that hour, when ease, affluence and love, all hand in hand, beckoned her eagerly to one road, from another rose the sad, careworn face of her mother, and in her ears rang that promise given her dying father to fill as far as possible his place to the loved ones left behind, and she felt that in forming other ties, she would only be risking separation from them, or else be placing the burden she had assumed upon the shoulders of another, and she knew too well the nobility and independence of her mother's nature to think for a moment that she would willingly become dependent upon any one's generosity as long as by untiring effort she could gain for herself an honest livlihood And Essie, possessing an equal share of that noble spirit, could he nor her mother for such sentiments, and would have been the last to request her to sacrifice them.

All this and more did she set forth for the consideration of her importunate lover, and tried to make him see as she did, but Ralph, impetuous and deeply in love, young and full of ardent hopes, could not at first be brought to see anything as *right* save the fruition of his own glowing hopes, and it was long ere Essie, with tears gemming her brown orbs, could prevail upon him even to listen to her objections. During this painful interview, however, the one deep sting of self reproach was removed from our heroine's heart. In the beginning of their interview, and immediately after Ralph's declaration of love for her, she had referred to his supposed engagement with his cousin, and to her unbounded surprise and joy, found that so far from being betrothed to Hortense, he had never entertained for a moment any thought of a marriage between them, and from his remarks Essie drew the inference that he as yet was unaware of the desire entertained by Mr. Moreland for a union between his son and his ward, and she therefore made no reference to that fact, leaving Ralph to draw his own inference as to the way in which she had taken up an idea that he was betrothed to his cousin. The thought was ineffably sweet to her that she had not bestowed her love upon one who did not reciprocate it; that it was returned fully by its object, and though she had firmness enough to refuse his hand and fortune, she did not, could not refuse him the knowledge of the pure love for him which reigned in her heart.

"And if you love me, Essie, why not prove that love by giving me the right to lift you above the life of care and toil you have laid out for yourself. You cannot doubt, darling, my willingness, my great desire to devote all my time and energies for the happiness and welfare of you and yours. Say then, dear Essie, that you will relinguish your purpose and let me take up the burden who am so much abler to bear it."

"Ah! do not tempt me further, Ralph, you know not how hard is the struggle in my heart already, but I cannot selfishly overlook your good and my own duty. The difference in our positions is too great to be overlooked for one moment, and though your generous heart forgets it, I do not, nor I fear would the members of your family willingly witness such a very different alliance from the many proud ones to which your rank and wealth entitle you."

"And do you for one moment, dear Essie, imagine that any objection urged by my family, which objections I am sure exist only in your sensitive mind, would for an instant even make me waver in my determination or love for you? No, a thousand times no! besides they will not, they cannot offer any objection. What has the consideration of a few paltry thousands to do with our life happiness? Oh! Essie," he went on passionately, "you wrong your own nature; you wrong me in thus making social position an obstacle to my happiness, and you cannot love me as you lately asserted if you allow a consideration like that to come in between us."

"And I do not allow it, dear Ralph," said Essie with emotion, "remember I only advanced that as one plea in justification of my resolve It is that sense of duty unfulfilled—that weight of a solemn promise on my soul alone which gives me strength to reject the happiness you offer me. Were it otherwise—were that one duty laid in the past by performance instead of, as it is, awaiting me in the future, then would I gladly prove to you how far above all minor considerations—how infinitely superior to all scruples of pride I deem the attainment of your wishes and the consummation of your happiness, for oh! Ralph," she cried brokenly, as tears, the mute evidences of her anguish, rolled over the troubled face, "I do and ever will love you, no matter how far our paths of life may diverge."

These low spoken, passionate words, the tears that showed her pain, calmed somewhat the wild vehemence of Ralph's feelings, gave more enlarged sway to his naturally noble, unselfish thoughts, and forced him to comprehend and venerate her high principles of action to which she so inflexibly adhered. He saw her as she was, a martyr to duty—an unfaltering and inflexible adherent of what she deemed the right, and every noble instinct of his young heart went out in admiration of her moral worth, while all thoughts of self shrank abashed in the presence of such heroic self-abnegation on the part of this frail girl scarce lifted by time from the portals of childhood.

"Forgive me, dear Essie, if my thoughtless words wounded you," he exclaimed in a low humbled tone. "Had I not been half wild with disappointment and grief I could not have spoken to you thus. Believe me, though I cannot see the necessity for this sacrifice of yourself to duty, I can appreciate all the strength of that beautiful spirit which prompts you to make the sacrifice. The love of a heart like yours is a boon too good for me I feel, and I will try to be more worthy of that at least by schooling this selfish, impatient heart of mine into submission to your decision. You say that were that duty fulfilled you would prove your desire for my happiness by consenting to be mine. Then, dear Essie, I will wait for the fulfillment of that duty; I will live, looking ever forward to the time when, having acted up to your standard of right, and achieved the victory you desire, you can come to me and say, 'My work is accomplished with duty—now I can enter the service of love.' Will you promise me this, darling Essie—will you thus reward my waiting?"

"I will promise you, dear Ralph," replied Essie, as a smile of grateful love broke through her tears, "that, be the coming years bright or gloomy, be the time long or short, through shadow as through sunshine, to keep undimmed the lamp of love in my own heart for you, but I do not and cannot accept such a sacrifice from you. It fate, or rather a kind Providence so ordains that I have to perform a certain duty, it is not just that you too should for my sake isolate yourself from all the sweets of love and domestic happiness, and I beg that you will forget me and take to your heart and home some one prepared to to devote all her time and thoughts to your happiness, with no other strong ties to divide her allegiance"

"Never!" resolutely spoke Ralph. "You are my first love, Essie; from the moment in which I first gazed into your face three years ago, I have loved you, worshipped you as the star set apart to illumine my life—as the one being necessary to the realization of my happiness and the only influence which can make my life a success. You see what you conscientiously consider a barrier to our union at present, and, recognizing and respecting all your sentiments of right, I shall no longer try to oppose myself to them, but will await the coming of that day which will I feel give you to me my own for life. I will wait."

And to this resolution our hero adhered in spite of Essie's unwillingness to accept his pledges of allegiance. Removing from the handsome diamond pin on his bosom a tiny gold chain, he severed it in twain, and laying one half in Essie's hand said, as he bent over and pressed upon her lips the first sweet kiss of love,

"If at any time in the future you find your heart changed, darling, send this to me. If," he added with a smile, "any miracle should cause a like change in me you'll receive this piece."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

[For the Magnolia Monitor.

SITES AN SOUNDS AT KULMINASHUN PINT KONTINERED.

BY KITTY KURIOUS

Well, az I wuz a gwine on tu sa, me an Miss Secall, Mistur and Miss Knowall an Doctur Curcall went tu the funeril uv the unfortunit Sensitiv Suitall, an, on our reteern, I seed sumthin else nue. It wuz the most butiful specermin uv konsistincy that I evvur seed in mi life Now, if thur iz ennything on this mundain, spher thie plannit I *du* admire it iz konsistinsy—tu see a man practis az well az preech the same cocktrin. Yew see befoar I kum visittin tu Kulminashun Pint, thur wuz a mity fuss made bi the *morii* part uv the peepul abowt too ur three inderviderals who had bin selling tickits at hi prises tu enny poar phools who wantid tu ride tu perdishun, an the moril men an wimmen had dun thur levil best tu shet up the offises an stop the travil on that line, but when it wuz put tu a vote, the tickit sellers got thur *spirits* up, an, eech man grabbin a fourteen dubble *barril* gun, swoar that any imperdint white man ur nigger who votid agin sellin tickets would be blode intu a figger 0 quicker than litnin. Tha wantid tu noa if this wuzzent a free kountry, and wheer wuz theer rights? Swoar if enny boddy inturfeerd with theer rale rode tha'd go tu Washington citty, an, aftur knokin the legislatur, kongress an Grant intu the middle uv no wheer, tha'de bust the whool kapital up an sho um what it wuz to fule with Messers. Rakeali, Rascall an Ruinall. Well, evvurybody got skeered, uv koarse, an the tickit sellurs kep the rite tu sen men tu perdishun, an histed a nue sine readin thusly:

Kum on all! Tickats tu Turdihun only ten cents! Refreshmints at evvry stashun! Easy ront doun grade!

Well, evvry moril pursin wuz ungenerus enuf tu kaul this mene, but *liddunt* them men redeem theer karacturs noldi. Twuz thusly tha dun t On the da uv the fewneril, three soar fellers feelin bad abowt Sensitiv's leth, felt despint an thort thade enjoy a ride. So tha bot sum tickits frum Misturs Rakeall, Rascall and Ruinall, an, uv koarse, thort tha wuz at liberty tu ride whur tha pleezed. But, he lan sakes! tha haddent mear than uck theer sects an got *skeem* up, beoar in rushed all the tickit sellurs, an, snatchin them deludid traylus outen that keach, kommenced beller in: sumboddy tu stop pum from brokin the divine law, an in ten minits tha had he three limbur krittuns gaunted an ung up in the heels like unter fat sorkers. When we kum to, Mistur Rakeall, Mistur Rascall an Mistur Ruinall wuz eech wuz with hyn book an bible, standin over them sum so sain, "I'm a moril man; I don't lik unmoril kondukt in the town, an if yew *don't* stop breakin the Divine Komandments, I'll break yewr dam fool nec!" We *most hav order!*

Well, tha let um hang theer till all evil *spirits* had dripped out at theer mouths, and then tha sed tu um:

"Becin az how yew spent your last quarter fur tickits with us, we'll let yew down fur haf prise. We'll find yew three thousind dollurs."

"Mush—hic—bliged," sed wun uv he victums. "Lonr az—hic—yew me it—jis gim me wun thousan fivundr'n an—hic—keep all balans fur sewer—hic—trubble."

Well I wuz ovmkum with theer nobil acks. I node theer *wu*, a reword in stoar fur sich men, an I wantid um tu no it. I rit rite off tu wun uv um, Mistur Ruinall, and tole him tu reed the xxiii chaptur uv Mathew an he wud see the hi opinun liz Savi[illegible] uv him. Whi ges wun vurse much; "But woe unto ye [illegible] and Pharisees, hypocrites [illegible] up the kingdom of h[illegible] men, for ye neither go [illegible] neither suffer them that [illegible] go in"

[Writ[illegible]

Wi[illegible]

BY LELIA [illegible]

I am haunted by a vision, a vi[illegible]
Of a dim, old moss-[illegible]
feet have wandered oft;
Where, through the dim alc[illegible]
Like stars in a twilight sky,
Sweet flowers are softly blowing,
Scenting each zephyr's sigh.

There the swaying pines and willows that arch above in air,
Breathe love to starry flowers [illegible] sweet and clear.
While the birds, like [illegible]
'Mid the tangled branches [illegible]
Warbling song [illegible]
Spring's brightest [illegible]

And the hum of each tiny insect that [illegible] upon a leaf,
Floats up to God thanks [illegible] life so brief.
And the song of nature, [illegible]
From mountains [illegible]
Is swelled as it upward floats [illegible]
By the anthem of the waves.

But not all joyful sounds [illegible] this anthem of the waves.
To my heart 'tis but a requiem which swells above the graves
Of loved ones who lie sleeping
Low in that forest old,
Whose verge the sun's now creeping
In waves of lambent gold.

There side by side lie sleeping a sire and his son—
For one life's joys had ended for the other just begun:
And in the flush of manhood
There another still was [illegible]
A husband, kin [illegible]
Sleeps neath the [illegible] shade.

While by him meek [illegible] as a broken lily falls.
Sleeps a tiny, darling [illegible] the pet and pride of all.
All day in that forest old
My wearisome treasure [illegible]
Gathering butter-cups [illegible]
To deck each loved one's grave

Chasing the brilliant humming birds that sped like arrows by,
And laughing at the shadows that swayed with each zephyr's sigh.
Like the chime of sweet bells sounding
Was the laugh of childish glee,
And o'er the green sward bounding
He brought the flowers to me.

But the little feet grew weary—the silvery laughter died
In mellow waves and echoes along the green hill-side—
Death's twilight fell around him
Mid the flowers he chased [illegible] eyes
There wandering angels found him
And bore their lovely prize

From amid the birds and flowers in that forest old and gray
Where he gathers flowers immortal in realms of endless day.
And this is the vision that ever
Will haunt my worn [illegible]-tossed brain—
The hand of time can never
Disperse the shadowy train
Of loved and lost who come to me with each recurring day.
Like spectres from the mounds made in that forest far away.