

ready tongue-talking, taking rank as chief favorite. Amongst these new admirers Parker and De La Tour kept the near place which relationship and friendship gave them. They it was whose constant visits cheered Madam Emslie's invalid life—they who formed the girls' daily escort in their walks by the seashore—they who shared all the details of their simple home life.

But after a while a change seemed to come over Harry. Often when on a rainy day De La Tour would sit and read to the sisters, busy over their stitching, of the woes of Clarissa Harlowe, or the splendors of Sir Charles Grandison, Harry would be off drinking with the British officers at the Great Pontac, to appear latter with reddened face and unsteady gait. The inactive life did not suit him, and De La Tour began to urge him to go off to his grant of land, and so save the remnant of his fortune from the gambler's table.

These remonstrances were but sulkily met, for the friendship which had grown and strengthened with the perils of warfare and the gloomy days of Yorktown, was now strained by the pressure of civilized life. Honestly as Harry admired his friend, he perhaps found it no easier than other folks to play second fiddle, but all the same this was inevitable.

De La Tour was a man familiar with the great world, who could dance a minuet, and sigh over the latest play or novel, and seem at home in any lady's drawing-room; while poor Harry, who could fight and jest among men with equal facility, found himself strangely awkward when he attempted to join in any of the stately colonial gaieties, and felt an unacknowledged grudge against his friend for his social successes.

And so it came about that De La Tour often danced with the sisters at Government House balls, or walked with them in some gay party to one of the tea-houses to the north of the town, though Harry was absent, and though De La Tour was sorry that it should be so, in these summer days his mind was so full of other thoughts that he had but passing ones to give to his comrade.

The change to this summer dallying might have disturbed tougher hearts than his, after the two years of peril and adventure, when he had tirelessly led his devoted band through the forests and swamps of the Carolinas—two years ended by the Yorktown disaster and the flight from his native land. Throughout that time he had kept the remembrance of the three months of illness, spent in the Emslie's New England home—of the fair face and gentle skill of his nurse, Rachel.

In many a solitary night watch he had relived that day when, the rebels having had tidings of his whereabouts, he had been carried out to a dense pinewood, and all day long, as he lay with his helpless leg, Rachel had sat by him, her face lit with a dauntless courage, while the shouts of their enemies echoed around the house and meadows. In such moments he had often dwelt on the idea that when the war was over, and he once more in possession of the family plantation, he would go north and win her for his wife—but in these July days he rejoiced that fate had ordered otherwise, for he knew now that the tender admiration which he had ever felt for Rachel was as starlight to sunshine before the strength of the passion for Esther, which possessed him like a fever. For one smile or kind glance from her he was willing to lay his manhood down for those small feet to trample upon—for one promise from her lips he would count the world well lost, and deem a home in the Nova Scotian wilderness a veritable paradise.

One early summer morning he had gone to the Emslie's house, only to find that the sisters had already started with a gay party to dine at a tea-house on the Windsor road, and jealous thoughts of a certain English baronet hurried his feet as he instinctively followed them thither.

His fears were justified. As he followed the pathway between the fantastically clipt shrubs towards the central pavilion, from which gay voices sounded, he caught sight of a certain pink petticoat in a shady corner, and the vision of a red coat beside it caused his mouth to set in an unpleasantly grim fashion.

Rachel was standing on the pavilion steps amid a gaily clad group, of which Lady Faulkner, the Governor's wife, was one, and De La Tour had enough command over himself to answer the great lady's playful rebukes for his tardiness with his usual grace.

"I had three servants beating the town for you this morning, Captain De La Tour, but to no avail to discover your retreat, and so you must not blame me if your favorite place is lost to you," and she sent a significant glance toward the shady pathway.

De La Tour grew pale as he answered, "A soldier must learn to bear the reverses of fortune—but your ladyship's kindness in remembering me is none the less. The Governor must bear the blame of my absence, though, for I was closeted with him on business."

"I will scold him when I get home," said the lady, and then he was free to turn to Rachel.

"Will you not walk with me?" he said, his self-absorbed suffering instinctively craving sympathy, and together they strolled down a path which led away from Esther toward a seat.

Wrapt in his own sorrows as he was, De La Tour's attention was caught by the pale and worn air of his companion, and, with a touch of compunction for his late indifference, he said gently, "Your face hardly matches this gay scene—you look weary and unlike your usual cheerful self."

The eyes that she raised to his were wistful. "It troubles me to be away from my mother. She grows weaker daily, and, I know, craves to have me beside her. I only came to day because I cannot bear for Esther to be always alone among these strangers."

"And cannot she do without her pleasures while her mother lies sick?" he asked bitterly.

The eyes raised to seek his sympathy dropped again to her clasped hands. Rachel's woman's wit was quick to know that it was love's wayward humor to blame its idol—love that craved for contradiction—and giving him that, as she would have given him all else that he desired, she said gently.

"Ah, no, you must not think her heartless. 'Tis I, who have not the courage to tell her that our mother's days are numbered. She is so young, and has known so few bright days."

Her quiet sorrows would have touched De La Tour if he had not been so self-absorbed. As it was, he said sullenly:

"And so for want of a little courage you allow her to spend her mother's last days in a fashion she must ever repent, and to be made the town's talk by that wild Englishman. Can you be capable, Rachel, of scheming to see her a baronet's wife?"

Beneath a calm exterior Rachel's nature was a fiery one, and now she flashed out.

"Captain De La Tour, I will not hear such words from you. What right have you to judge our actions thus, or to follow my sister with a gloomy face if she speaks to any save yourself? The child has grown up to a sad life in these days of warfare, and now you grudge her the smallest pleasure."

De La Tour seemed suddenly aware of his transgressions. "Forgive me, Rachel," he said, sadly—"I was a brute to speak thus to you. God knows I grudge her nothing," then with a sudden outbreak of emotion, "but, oh, Rachel! You must know how I adore her! You must know that my whole life is set on the chance of winning her! I am so desperately in earnest that these men who hang around and play at worship nearly madden me. In her presence I am helpless and awkward as the merest country bumpkin."

Screened by the foliage from the other groups, he hid his face on his crossed arms on the back of the bench.

Rachel sat very still watching the shadows of a rosebush playing on the pathway, and hearing the voice of a gay little song that shifted towards her from one of the groups. At last, gathering her forces in a supreme effort, she spoke.

"I have known from the first," she began—her voice sounding strange to her own ears—"that you loved her. I felt, as we stood that first day on the beach, that it would be so."

"And you were glad?" De La Tour asked eagerly.

Rachel could not have grown paler as she answered.

"What could I better wish my sister than a strong man to protect her in these weary days?"

"God knows how I would protect her. But have I any chance? You must know if she thinks kindly of me? Sisters know all each other's thoughts, do they not?"

Rachel smiled a ghost of a smile.

"The heart knoweth its own bitterness," she quoted irrelevantly, then, "She thinks kindly of you," she said—"but whether she loves you I know not. She is young, and is tasting her first pleasures, but I doubt not that with time and patience you can teach her to love you. It is a lesson a woman easily learns."

De La Tour never noticed the bitterness of her words. "Oh, if but time and patience are needed, I will serve for her as Jacob served for Rachel." A shudder ran over Rachel. "But what lies heavy at my heart is, that the fleet must so soon sail, and that if I would win back a penny of my lost fortune, I must go with it."

"You set your fortune above her, then?"

"'Tis for her sake I would save it."

At that moment Rachael saw her sister coming alone down the path towards them, and with a sudden impulse she rose to her feet, while De La Tour sat staring into her face as though therein he read inspiration. Truly, standing there, there was in the pallor of her beauty a weird power which would have fixed the eyes of most men.

"Tell her now that you love her. Do not let her repulse you. Use all the power of your man's will to make her give you her promise."

With these words she was gone from his side, and as De La Tour went forward to meet his approaching pet, his pulses were throbbing too fiercely for him to give any thought to the strangeness of her manner.

The sisters were not alone until they had reached their room that evening. Then Esther rushed to her sister, still blushing and dimpling with the echo of her lover's words.

"He says that you know—that you encouraged him," she began, breathlessly. "Naughty Rachel, why could you not leave me as I was?"

"And yet you look happy now," Rachel said, holding her by both arms, and looking into her rosy face.

"It is so nice to be made love to and he does it so well. He is a charming lover, if he were only not so desperately in earnest. It frightens me to be loved like that," and a wistful look replaced her dimples.

Rachel did not pause to reassure her. "But you are pledged to him?" she asked, unaware how her clasp on her sister's arm had tightened.

"Don't pull my wrist off! Yes, I am pledged. He would have it so, and he says that he can teach me to love him, and that he will always make me happy. It is very nice, and yet, ah, Rachel, it was so pleasant as it was before," and she sighed lightly.