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Conclusion
Number **ONE** of Competition
Story.

Two Chapters in Two Lives.

CHAPTER II.

* * * Kiss me—once—and go."



THE NOISY, dusty city
once more, with its
busy throngs, and
its round of gaiety
commencing, as so-
ciety rises and
smiles upon its
friends again, after the drowsy
lanquor of summer days—and
Charlie Fane in the midst of it
all!

It is now a month since he
left Nemiah Rapids, and the intervening days
have not been all happiness. When one has a
continual dull sense of something lost to one's
life, and a feverish desire to obliterate from
memory that which most forces itself upon the
thoughts, then do days and nights become one
long struggle against self and recollection em-
bitters everything.

Amy Lester had greeted the return of her lover
rather coldly, but was too proud to question
him as to the cause of his protracted absence,
or remark upon his very lame excuses for the
same.

On this particular afternoon Charlie made
his way to the Lester's with rather a bitter
expression upon his usually bright face, and
this deepened when he stood in the hand-
some drawing room and heard the faint
rustle of silk, which preceded the entrance
of his fiancée. She came into the room slowly
and with rather a hesitating smile on her
pretty face—a face which might well appeal
to any man, with its sweet mouth, soft blue
eyes, and mass of fair hair waving back from
a low forehead.

"I expected you earlier, Charlie," she said,
as he advanced to meet her. He kissed her

lightly on the cheek as he answered in a tone
of polite indifference, "Yes. I must apologize,
but just as I was leaving I had a caller from the
country, and couldn't get away."

"Was it some one from Cranston?" Amy
asked, quickly, as a slight blush rose to her
cheek.

"Yes; a school teacher up there. A man of
the name of Williams—but he wouldn't interest
you, so we needn't go into particulars," and
with an unpleasant little laugh, Fane walked to
the window and stood looking out.

"As long as it wasn't a water nymph, or a
'nut brown maid,' I won't ask for details of
the interview," said Amy, lightly, but in spite
of her bantering tone, her eyes were very wist-
ful as they rested on the tall figure at the
window. The remainder of the short visit was
occupied in trying over some new music which
Charlie had brought with him; and, when they
finally separated, it was with the agreement
that he should call that evening and accompany
Amy and her mother to a box at the Grand.

That evening Charlie sat in his bachelor's
den, which was cosy and warm. In his hand
was a letter, and as he read it over, his brows
contracted in a heavy frown.

The epistle began, "Dearest Rosalind," and
the pith of its contents was contained in these
words, "Mr. William's is a good man, I feel
sure, and he loves you dearly. When he was
here to-day, he told me he knew why you had
refused him last summer, but you see, don't
you dear, what an impossible thing it would
be for us to continue the relations of those
summer days? We were very happy for a
little while, but other things must be consid-
ered, and we must now drop romance, and face
the facts of everyday life."

And so on, and as the man finished the cold,
carefully worded farewell, which had cost him
hours of misery and indecision, his face grew
set and hard, and there was an unpleasant curl
of his lips, when he folded the document and
placed it in an envelope, preparatory to post-
ing it on his way to the Lester house.

The theatre was crowded that night, and the
Lesters had quite a party in their box. Charlie
was almost boisterously genial as he kept up
an animated conversation with first one and
then another of his fellow guests. Only Amy
noticed his forced laugh, and the nervous
working of his hands; and in proportion as his
gaiety increased, she grew more and more
silent and constrained. The play progressed,
and the theater grew hot and close. Amy
leaned forward and touched her lover on the
arm, "Charlie," she said, in a low tone, "I
must get out, I feel so faint—Charlie!"

But he neither answered, nor turned to look
at her. His eyes were fixed upon the stage,
his face was drawn and white.

"Let no face be kept in mind
But tho' fair of—Rosalind."

came in a silvery voice from the stage. With
a smothered cry he staggered up from his seat
as if he had been stabbed, and pushed past the
startled occupants of the box, past his pale,
trembling fiancée, out into the corridor, and
on, till he finally reached the street, and there,
hatless and breathless, he paused to collect his
thoughts. This must be the end, he knew.
The growing coldness between himself and
Amy must culminate now, but he felt no con-
punction. He looked round vaguely. Some
one was coming out of the opera house.
Why, surely it was Mr. Marston, and that was
Amy with him!

They must not see him standing there, so he
drove to his quarters, there to spend a most
wretched night.

His surmise proved true, and after that
evening all was over between himself and
Amy. The day after the unfortunate affair at

the theatre he received a little note, asking
him to call and explain his conduct of the
previous night. He wrote, in answer, that he
could give no explanation, and so it had ended.
That was three weeks ago, and he had not seen
Amy since.

He felt he must get away, and to one place
only could he go. Accordingly he packed a
small valise, and took the train for Cranston.

He arrived at the hotel about four o'clock
one afternoon, and a few moments after was in
a canoe and on his way to the rapids—to the
old trysting place at the foot of the turbid
waters.

All was still as he neared the familiar spot.
The cold, October sunlight shone through the
leaves and danced merrily on a grassy terrace
near the shore where he used to sit with Rosa-
lind. Ah! something was moving there now.
How his heart bounded, and almost choked
him. A canoe was drawn up on the beach, and
a dark figure, half hidden by bushes, knelt and
swayed slowly backward and forward—back-
ward and forward. Charlie hastily drew up his
boat and strode towards the swaying shadow.

"Rosalind! Rosalind!" he said in a husky
voice, "you said you would be waiting where
we always met, and now—my darling—I have
come Rosa—"

The figure rose slowly, and turning as slowly,
confronted him.

"Yes, she's waitin'," said a harsh voice,
"Oh! she's waitin'—but don't you dare come
nigh her, or I'll—I'll kill you. Do you hear?
I could kill you now!"

And the face of Rosalind's father grew black
with rage and hatred, his small eyes gleamed
dangerously. For a moment he stood, glaring,
as if about to fulfil his threat, but suddenly his
head drooped, his eyes lost their light, and he
muttered brokenly—

"But—but she—what will her mother
say!"

Fane stumbled blindly forward towards an
object lying on the ground 'neath the bushes.
But the father was too quick for him. Turning
swiftly he stooped and lifted the motionless
burden in his arms, and made his way to his
canoe. As he passed, Fane caught a glimpse
of a white face, a mass of wet, matted hair, and
a pair of staring eyes—that was all.

He could not move. He heard the grating
of a boat being pushed off, then the splash of a
paddle, and he was alone—alone on this spot
with its haunting memories of summer days,
when honor was forgotten in the touch of a
sun-browned hand, and the smile of two sweet,
red lips, when love sped his arrows with an
aim, not less impetuous, not less sure, than the
rushing rapids themselves. But after the tur-
bulence and conflict of these swift waters
before him came a clear, smooth space where
the tired drops rested and basked in the sun-
shine. And was there to be no rest for him?
No peace after the struggle and anguish of this
mad passion? He had but followed the
instincts of nature as did the waters. They
found calm at length—surely—surely—

But the rapids burst into a sudden roar of
indignation, the landscape grew blurred and
dim. He threw himself on the ground and
buried his head in his arms. When he again
raised it the shadows had grown long, and
wavering, the pall of evening hung over all.
It was cold, and the waters, now dark and
angry, made an accompaniment for the pines,
as the latter bent their stately heads and
wailed—

"Let no face be kept in mind
But tho' fair of—Rosalind."

