

MY LADY OF THE SOUTH

planation, but I — I find I cannot, and Colonel Donald thinks I had better confess the truth."

"I hope you also think so."

"Yes, I — I believe I do, only I hardly know how to begin, how to make it all clear. When you told me once that you cared for me, I said that I loved Colonel Donald. You remember that?"

"Yes," eagerly, "was it not true?"

"It was true, but — but not in the way you thought. Listen to me: I wish to tell you a little — just a little — about my own life; then you will understand."

She paused with eyes cast down, her bosom heaving.

"My birth took place fifteen miles east of here on Clear Creek in the mountains. Long before then my family had become involved in a feud which has cost many lives. My father was not of a nature to keep this up, but was compelled to defend himself, and for some years the other side was in the ascendant, and used their power remorselessly. When I was but a child our home was burned to the ground, and my mother, with me in her arms, driven to the mountains. My father was away at the time, and the exposure of the night cost my mother's life."

I could see the tears in her eyes at the memory, yet she continued speaking.

"It seemed as if this loss of his wife temporarily crazed my father. It seemed to change his entire disposition, and he lived only for revenge, and to drive the other faction from this region. For the time he appeared to lose all interest in me, and passed his days and