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LOVE'S TRIUMPH.

A STORY OF LOVE AND WAR.

BY MARY J. HOLMES,

Author of "Lena Rivers," "Edna Browning,"
"Tempest and Sunshine," Etc., Etc.

It was as elegantly furnished as his own sleeping apartment at home, but it bore unmistakable marks of haste and refinement; while the air of pure gentle womanhood which pervaded it brought Rose very vividly before him. "This is my niece's room, Maude de Vere," Mr. Haverill explained, when they were alone, and Will was drying himself before the fire, kindled by the woman who had admitted them, and who, Will saw, was a mulatto. "My niece is not at home now," he continued. "She is in South Carolina; has been gone several months on a visit to old Judge Tunbridge, her mother's uncle. I'm her mother's brother, and the boy Charlie has lived with me since the first year of the war. Their father was Captain de Vere, from North Carolina, and was killed at the first Bull Run. Nelly, their mother, never held up her head after that. I was with her when she died, and brought the children home. Maude is twenty now and Charlie fourteen. I am their guardian. Maude is Union, Charlie secesh, but safe. They have a great deal of property here and there, though how it will come through the war, the Lord only knows."

Will was glad to see that his host was inclined to talk on without waiting for answers, and he kept quiet, while Mr. Haverill continued:

"I dare say you wonder to find a chap like me among people who are so bitter against you Yankees, and I sometimes wonder at myself. I am South Carolina born, and ought to be foremost in the rebellion; but hanged if I can see that it is right. Why, I might as well set up a government of my own, here on the Oak Plantation, and refuse to come under any civilized laws. Mind, though, I don't think the South all wrong—not a bit of it. The North did bully us, and the election of Mr. Lincoln was particularly obnoxious to the majority here, but we had no right to secede, and you did your duty trying to drive us back. For a spell I kept quiet, didn't take either side; or, if I did, I wanted the South to beat, as all my interests are here. But when our folks got to abusing their prisoners so shamefully, and told so many lies by way of deceiving us fellows who live among the hills and only get the news once or twice a week, I changed my politics, and after the day when I found one of my neighbors, and the best man that ever breathed, too, hung to a tree like a dog, with the red 'Abolitionist' pinned to his coat, I made a vow that every energy I had should be given to caring for and helping just such wretches as you, and if I've helped one I've helped a thousand. Why at least a hundred have slept in this very room. Maude's room, for, as I told you, she is Union to the backbone, and led one chap across the mountains herself. She is a regular Di Vernon, and is not afraid of the very devil. When she went away, she bade me put her here, as the room least liable to suspicion. To the folks around me I am the roughest kind of a Secessionist, and I suppose nobody can beat me swearing about the Yankees, just to hoodwink 'em, you know. I suppose that's wrong; my wife would say so; she was a saint when she was here—she is an angel now. She died five years ago—before the war broke out; and Lois, the woman you saw, has been my housekeeper since. I shouldn't like the North to take her from me. They tried it once—when a squad of 'em ransacked my house—and I was sick in bed. Maude threatened to blow their brains out; and, sir, she would have done it, too, if the scoundrels hadn't let Lois alone."

"I don't agree with your folks on the bigger question, though none of mine has run away since the Proclamation, which I did not like. They know, too, they are free, or will be when the Yankees come for I took pains to tell them, and gave them liberty to cut stick for the Federal lines as soon as they pleased; but they stayed, and great help I find them in the business I'm carrying on. They are constantly on the look-out for runaways or refugees, and are quite as good as bloodhounds to scent one. They told me about you, and I watched and saw you go into that cave, which is on my land, and which few know about, or they do they find it a spring-hole, and never dream that anybody can hide in there. Somebody else must have seen you, too, for word came that a man was hiding in the mountains, and as the acknowledged leader of as hard a set as ever hunted a Yankee, I went with 'em to find you, and carried in my pocket that bacon and cornbread which I managed to drop into the cave when I sat with my back against it. I knew you must be hungry; and it might be some time before I could come to your aid. We didn't find the chap; but to-morrow they'll be at it again, and so, while I help 'em hunt for a man about your build, you will stay in the room in Lois's charge. Maude has a good many gimcracks here, such as books and things, which may amuse you. She is coming home by-and-by. The house is very different then. You ought to see Maude. We are very proud of her. That's her picture, only not half so good-looking," and he pointed to a small oil painting hanging above the mantel.

It was a splendid head, and the glossy black hair bound about it in heavy braids gave it a still more regal look. The eyes, too, were black, but very soft and gentle in their expression, though something about them gave the impression that they might flash and blaze brilliantly under excitement. It was a beautiful face, and Will did not wonder that his host was proud of his niece—prouder even than of the pale-faced,

conceited boy, who, next day, while the hunt for the runaway went on among the mountains, tried to entertain Will Mather by telling him of his old home in North Carolina, and how happy they were there before the war came and took his father away.

"I don't see it in the light Uncle Paul and sister do," Charlie said. "I don't want them to catch and torment the presence, or murder folks who don't think as they do; but I do want our side to succeed, and when I hear of a victory, I say, 'Hurrah for the Confederacy!' I can't help it when I think of father, who was killed by the Yankees, and all the trouble he and his people brought me. I'm willing to work like a dog for the refugees and prisoners, and I'd sooner die than betray one, but if I was a man, I'd join Mr. Davis's army sure."

The pale face of the boy was flushed all over, and his dark eyes burned with Southern fire as he frankly avowed his sentiments, and Will Mather could not repress a smile at this noble specimen of a Southern rebel.

"I like you, my boy, for your frankness," he said, and when the war is over I shall have to send for you to come North and be cured of your treason."

"It is not treason," and the boy stamped his girlish foot. "It is not treason any more than the views held by the Revolutionary soldiers. Didn't the colonies secede from England, and does anybody call Washington a traitor now? I tell you it is success which decides the nature of the thing. If we succeed, future historians will speak of us as patriots, as a persecuted people, who gave our lives in defence of our homes and freedoms."

"You won't succeed, my poor boy. The Confederacy is gasping its last breath. You will be conquered at the last, and then what have you gained?" "Nothing—nothing but ruin!" and the tears poured over the white face of this defender of Southern rights.

Soon recovering himself, however, he exclaimed proudly:

"We may be conquered, but not subjugated. You can't do that with all your countless hordes of men, and your millions of money. The North can never subjugate the South. We may lay down our arms because we have no other alternative, but we shall still think the same, and feel the same as we do now."

Here was a curious study for Will Mather, who was surprised to find such maturity of thought and so strong determination in one so young and frail.

"No wonder it is hard to conquer a people composed of such elements," he thought, and he was about to continue the conversation when he was startled by a loud blast from a horn among the hills.

"They've caught some one. They always do that as a kind of exultation," the boy exclaimed, wringing his hands, and evincing as much distress as he had heretofore shown bitterness against the opposing party.

It was a poor refugee from a neighboring county, whom, in spite of Paul Haverill's precautions, they had found in a hollow tree and whom they brought



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more dead than alive down to the Oak Plantation, amid vociferous cries of "Tar and feather him!" "Hang him to a sour-apple tree!" "Give him a taste of the halter!" "Make him an example to all other sneaking Yankee sympathizers!"

With his face as white as marble, and his lips set firmly together, Paul Haverill stood in the midst of the noisy group, which he tried to quiet.

"Let us try him by jury," he said, and something in his voice reassured the frightened, haggard wretch, who had seen his house burned down and his son shot before his very eyes, and of course expected no mercy.

The trial by jury proved popular, and then Paul Haverill suggested that a judge be chosen in the person of some one who had lost a near friend in the war, and was of course competent to mete out full justice to the criminal—"Charlie, for instance," and his eye fell on the boy, who had just stood around and was standing close by the prisoner. The boy caught his uncle's meaning at once, and exclaimed:

"Yes, let me be the judge. My father was killed at Bull Run. My mother died of grief. Surely I may decide."

Charlie de Vere was a favorite with the men, who knew how staunch a Confederate he was, and, waiving the trial for want of time, they said:

"Charlie shall decide whether we hang, drown, whip or tar and feather the prisoner at the bar."

Then, with far more energy and fire than had characterized his vindication of the South, Charlie de Vere pleaded for the criminal, that they should let him go. "Just this once, for father's sake, and mine, and Maude's," he said; and, at the mention of Maude, the dark brows began to clear, and the scowling faces grew more lenient in their expression, for Maude de Vere was worshipped by the rough men of the mountains, who, though they knew her sympathies were on the Union side, made an exception in her favor, and held her person and opinions sacred. For her sake, they would let their captive go, giving him warning to leave the neighborhood at once, not let himself be seen again in their midst while the war lasted.

And thus it chanced that Will Mather had a companion in his wanderings, which were renewed the following day; the boy Charlie acting as guide through the most dangerous part of the way, and at last bidding him good-by, with tears in his eyes, he said:

"I hope you won't be caught; but I don't know, the woods are full of our soldiers. Travel at night, and hide through the day. Trust no one, but the negroes; and if you are captured, ask for mercy in sister's name. Everybody knows Maude de Vere."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It was the night of the third of July, the anniversary, as she supposed of her husband's death, and Rose was sitting up unusually late. "She could not sleep for thinking of one year ago, and the white-faced man who lay upon the battlefield with the rain falling upon him. It was a clear starlight night, and she leaned many times from her open window and looked up at the kind eyes keeping watch above her. But she did not see the figure coming down the street and up the walk to their own door; the figure of a worn-out soldier, who from the prison at Salisbury had escaped to Tennessee, and had come from thence straight on until the midnight train dropped him at the Rockland station."

To be Continued.

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