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TALES OF THE LINKS OF LOVE.

BY ALEXANDER SOMERVILLE.

LILLYMERE.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—Continued.

"That is the work to be done. The aged Earl died suddenly last year. Lillymere's identity and legitimacy found, he at once becomes Earl Royalfort."

"That is the business Lady Mortimer and I, her Secretary, have now in hand. And the Donna Essel Bell Euryntia to accompany us to England, to establish that the young gentleman was once the infant DeLacy Lillymere, taken from her in Ogleburn woods, Scotland."

"How splendid in her rich ripe beauty will Essel Bell Euryntia appear! In the Chamber of High Inquest, testifying to events occurring at a time when I, herd boy of Branxton, adored her as child princess of more than earthly beauty. As Fairy Queen of the West, come to tell me of rocks of gold in the gorgeous regions under the setting sun—the Thousand Islands, far away in great America."

"That is the work we have in hand. Yet I shouldn't be greatly surprised, on getting to the army of the West, to find Lady Mary Mortimer with sleeves tucked up, apron on, doing drudge duty as an hospital nurse. Reaching there at close of the battle told of by telegraph, her ladyship and maid were very likely to stretch helping hands to the first of the wounded met."

El Abra's Guerillas, like Simon Lud's Redbolts, were mounted horsemen acting as scouts; penetrating at times far beyond the army corps to which they belonged.

Hiram Orde, Lud's lieutenant, reported to the Captain. He had seen two ladies on horseback in the woods, both accomplished riders. They seemed to have lost their route; occasionally approaching near El Abra's lines, but suddenly halting, spying with telescopes both forces, they wheeled to right or left, vanishing in flight away.

"Your inference?" inquired Lud.

"That they are ladies of the country, uncertain which force be friends, which foes; and not knowing a way of escape, are flitting about; scanning hill and plain to the horizon in hope of espying an opening to flee."

"Possibly, Mr. Orde. Yet more likely they are spies watching us. How near did they approach our camp?"

"A few times they've been seen, I'm told, pretty near. Within carbine range fairly; but none of the men had heart to fire on them. When invited by signal to come in they fled. When followed by our best mounted troopers they eluded pursuit."

"Mr. Orde, direct that every Redbolt be informed he is not to fire upon, or do the ladies injury, on pain of drumhead and death. If they can be captured, well. If captured they are to be treated as gentlewomen, and brought to this office."

This direction was given. Soon after silent alarm signals passed round the Redbolt bivouac and outposts that El Abra was in the saddle, stealthily leading a guerilla company by wide detour to take the Redbolt posts by surprise.

The chargers stood ready saddled. In an instant girths were tightened, bridles put over halters. Riders sprang to the stirrup and mounted. Lud at their head. Lieutenant Hiram Orde with the right division, Sergeant Tass Cass with the left. Each looked to his two pistols, and carbine; they knew the sabre to be trusty dangling at the thigh.

Nothing being yet seen like an enemy, Lud demanded:

"How were the two lady riders dressed? Were they armed?"

"In mantles of blue, like the Redbolts. In grey hat and feathers of El Abra's Guerillas," rejoined the Lieutenant.

"Forward!" said Lud softly, as he scanned the openings in the bush with his powerful glass. "The Guerillas glide stealthily among the trees, either to take our out-piquet unawares, or draw us to attack."

"Think El Abra would draw us to the attack?" said Hiram Orde. "Dost think to gratify the old grey Wizard?"

"Right away," replied Lud. "Move quietly down, left in front, under cover and in rear of number three piquet, which at present they seem to avoid. Then ride at them sword in hand, pistol ready. Close and make prisoners before the Wizard has time to do much."

"Don't admire to fight the Wizard," said Orde; "should like to catch and lynch El Abra right away, and be done with the cuss."

"Leave the Magician to me," said Lud, as they quietly approached under cover of a bluff, on top of which stood Redbolt sentinels unscanned from sight of the enemy. "Leave El Abra to me," he repeated, "I feel a presentiment that to encounter the Guerilla Chief in hand to hand fight is in my destiny."

"I could shoot him with the carbine now! Won't I, Captain?"

"Too soon, Hiram; you'd scare the troop. When we get up to them single for shot or sabre some one else."

Rounding the eastern shoulder of the rugged bluff, an old earthquake wave fifty feet high, faces south, the setting sun gleaming in sparkling rays over a sheet of water, and among tall trees this side the water, the enemy were descried between the trees and shore.

Quickly the Guerillas perceived the Redbolts: the dismounted of them dashing down tobacco pipes, and vaulting to the saddle. El Abra from his own silver trumpet sounded the alarm; an elderly man with flowing grey mane and beard, and head of a lion.

Quickly the Redbolts and Guerillas rode at each other's ranks; man for man drawing pistols and shooting. But they who drew swords first had the advantage. They disarmed the pistol hands of men who had yet the sabre to draw, and that interval gave rapid cuts and thrusts.

Soon the sword fight was general. Some men falling to earth wounded with pistol in hand, took aim at combatants still mounted, and shot. But horses, as if knowing unfair play, trode the treacherous under hoof.

The Guerilla, Yaply Stroner, dexterous with his weapon, encountered the Redbolt Tass Cass. They fenced; their steeds, curvetting and circling around and around the pivot of conflict. Stroner, thinking he saw the moment to strike, delivered from the right shoulder with vehemence, the slant cut, one; which Cass received with outward guard parry and point; sending the point to Stroner's heart.

Stroner fell, the charger galloping away. The mishap causing some dismay to men of his side looking on from a distance. But to men engaged the fall of a comrade is seldom a misfortune than a twofold incentive to vehement ferocity.

Much in the same manner Captain DeVoeg of the Guerillas engaged Lieutenant Orde of the Redbolts. Horses plunging, passing, re-passing, and again returning; curvetting, circling, and wheeling on pivots of hind quarters, Hiram Orde at last delivered a cut with death in its force; the cut two from the left shoulder downward. With back handed upward guard parry and thrust, DeVoeg slew Hiram Orde.

Thus the two bands continued for well nigh half an hour; some pairs of combatants pausing a few minutes to breathe, eyeing each other the while with glare of rage. Then one or both bursting in fury from the pause, as some third man's shot—unfairly intervening—laid low a horse, or horse and rider.

At the first El Abra and the Redbolt Captain encountered hand to hand; old man's eye to young man's eye. The lion's mane and head shaking in fiery anger, until hair seemed rising on end. The dash of nimble arm, the defiant attitude of chivalrous Simon Lud evading the mighty arm of the Magician.

When Hiram Orde had fallen and many more, and the battle of flashing steel continued on the line where it began; in the woods remote from where it began; by the shore of the dull lake, the sun now gone down; and some furious horse-men in the lake fleeing and pursuing; partly swimming their horses, and still cutting, guarding, thrusting, parrying, slashing, bleeding, dropping from the saddle and drowning, El Abra paused. Still he kept guard with the eyes of magnetic power which, in his medical career, gained him the name of Magician. He spoke:

"Why, sir, do you assume the name, Simon Lud?"

"It is the name I choose to assume, sir."

"It is not your true name?"

"What is my true name?"

"DeLacy Lillymere; now by right Earl Royalfort of England. I had thought to fell you dead to the earth without your knowing whose hand slew you; but I admit the heir of Lillymere is brave, and hard to kill. However, young Lord Royalfort is bound to fall before the moon rise, and already the glimmer of her light comes on the horizon. Long ago I took arms against the ruling powers of England; they were strong, I weak. Weak then but strong now; a wealthier citizen of the South than any Lord in the British Empire. And now I am in the direct way, I trust, to embroil Great Britain and America in jealousies and acrimonies unending. Does it please you, sir, we resume the combat?"

"First your name?" cried the Captain.

"Abram Lud, of Irdale, Lancashire. A handloom weaver once. Leader of Blanketeer insurgents to punish insolent mechanics and factory capitalists who consigned handloom weavers by the half million to penury and death. To punish them and make terms, in the fires of revolution, with the ruling powers in London. Next I was physician, magician, and financier. And again a warrior for the institutions where I made myself the grandee El Abra."

"Abram Lud, I have lately seen your mother, and esteem her."

"So do I esteem my mother, sir; and would have seen her often, had she not wedded with that mean cuss Kenshaw. But unknown to him she has had from me most of the money

with which her numerous works of charity to orphans and outcasts have been performed. Poor Rhoda O'Loney! She is an Irishwoman my mother. Our families have been used to hanging. So, Lillymere, as you're to be hung by the South for taking arms in service of the North, you may as well submit. If you don't submit we two fight it out."

I hardly think El Abra meant other than a fair combat with the Redbolt Captain. But while they still parleyed, several Guerillas came in force to take him prisoner. The Captain defended himself with terrible energy of arm, and adroit management of his noble charger.

A hand was raised to shoot him dead, fingers at the trigger, when a lady with her riding whip struck the weapon aside.

The combat was renewed. The Guerillas fled. El Abra was conducted to the Redbolt camp a prisoner.

Captain Simon Lud to the lady rider:

"May I enquire, madam, are you one of two ladies observed in the woods this morning?"

"I and my maid did ride in the woods this morning. We hoped to find you, Captain."

"You are a lady of this vicinity?"

"No, sir, a stranger; quite a stranger."

"May I enquire name and residence?"

"Agnes Schoolar, of London."

"The equestrienne of Hyde Park?"

"Yes, Toby; no other."

"Why are you here, dear young lady?"

"Come to nurse you if wounded. Forgive the imprudence and presumption. Hearing you had gone into this war, I felt impelled to come."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THAT TERRIBLE NIGHT BETWEEN THE BATTLES.

WHEN the Redbolt Captain had temporarily disposed of his prisoner, taking care that one so noted for policy and yet so brave as El Abra, should be well guarded but not exposed to unnecessary rigour, he received returns of his killed, wounded and missing. Twenty-five out of eighty, of whom nine were killed, and four mortally wounded. Then he proceeded to the division of the tent where Agnes had been conducted, also under guard.

She was alone. Her dress the dark blue robe as previously seen. For the hat and feathers of grey she had substituted the red fez of Simon Lud's troopers. Probably, judging that grey would have pronounced her an enemy. The long mosquito veil enshrouding the head, was lifted as soon as the Captain entered.

They bowed; but did not yet approach to the touching of hands. He stood erect and apparently cold and haughty. Which perceiving the lady, at first timid and blushing, changed from a glowing complexion to the paleness of death. Had she come from England, under impulse of passionate tenderness to nurse him if sick, to shield him if her feeble arm might, and be received coldly, suspiciously?

So her thoughts ran, while yet he did not speak. Then she trembled, and felt as if life were going out of her; and would have fallen had he not prevented by now extending his arms and banding her gently to a camp chair.

"Pardon, dear Miss Schoolar," he said, "if I seem cold or harsh or ungrateful. But your presence here, under circumstances past and present so unparalleled, is so far out of the role of all things human and rational, that I'm unequal to the discernment of what should be said, what should be done."

"Let me go home now," she murmured. "I feared it was wrong. Now I perceive it was wrong. Any one in the world may do what I must not. At home I'm expected to do what none else in the world would; marry one I flee from. Have fled from. With none to flee to. Let Isa Antry come. I'll go home again and die."

She sobbed, yet still the Captain did not approach to soothe her. He stood deeply pitying in constrained silence. At last he said:

"The woman you name is a prisoner in the Provost Guard, to which you may be removed also, Miss Schoolar. An order came by telegraph to arrest you both as spies. Did I offer myself your bond I compromise your honour and my own. May I entreat some explanation?"

"This is very cruel. We came to offer personal service as nurses of the sick and wounded. We desired to find where, in this wide, wild country, your force might be, and purchased horses. We have a trusty coloured groom who remains with a sutler; the sutler's establishment also sustained by me for gratuitous use, preliminary to our transforming it to an ambulance. Isa Antry is a professional rider, daughter of the master who taught me in London."

"Apart from the danger and hardship, Miss Schoolar, which must be daily confronted in this campaign and throughout the war—for, until the end of the war, or my fall in action, the poor services of Simon Lud continue.—have you sufficiently weighed this matter, small to me, great to you, that when the war ends I'm to be as before, an outcast, without a name I can claim to be my own?"

"I saw you first as my father's clerk Toby;

and did not want to discover you as anything else; though I find you are more."

"How much more, Mademoiselle?"

"You are a hero. One of the bravest of the brave."

Leaving Miss Schoolar under a trusty guard, with orders to have her companion brought, that the two ladies might remain the night together in this comparatively solitary camp—probably as safe for lady strangers in a night of tumult and battle as any within fifty miles—Simon Lud repaired to a part of the tent adjoining, which was prison of his captive El Abra. He may not have known, but it happened that occupants of one heard what was said in the other. As he entered the Guerilla Chief spoke:

"Now I'm your prisoner, Captain, what follows?"

"El Abra, several of my men are slain, some mortally wounded, others less or more wounded, all for the present in a humour unfavourable to rebel guerillas. To keep them at bay now, I've engaged that if you are not court-martialled and shot by noon to-morrow, they are to lynch you at one p. m."

El Abra rejoined, as if not disconcerted:

"What is the name of that flying Amazon attached to the Redbolts, who so nimbly and well served you at a moment of peril? I've heard there is another. Had we such scouts, El Abra's Guerillas would of themselves win the independence of the South. I've just realized our mistake and the want to be supplied. Forthwith I assemble, organize, and lead to battle an Amazonian cavalry of the South."

"But you forget the court-martial and execution before noon to-morrow; failing which the lynching at one p. m."

"Captain, I don't forget. A great battle begun to-day; may continue all night, and will be hot to-morrow. They'll have no time for court-martials, and not a Redbolt of your command will commit murder; far less will you assassinate me yourself. We might, indeed, have fallen in fair fight, one of the other, though I aimed at taking you prisoner."

"You said you had aimed to strike me dead?"

"Rather than myself be stricken dead, yes. More than once you almost unhorsed me. Then I should have slain you if I could, yet probably not. I'm not bloodthirsty. I am in a condition now to fulfil the highest aims, hopes, dreams of your life."

"So you would seduce me to treason?"

"I would have you marry that daring young heroine. She deserves your love. Give her love and honour both. Go home to England. Claim your inheritance."

"El Abra, you are insolent. I am in the service of the United States."

It may have been unladylike; but under such special circumstances you may forgive Agnes that she listened with ear at the canvas of the tent.

"The United States have ceased to be," rejoined the Guerilla.

"No, El Abra. Thirty millions of people will not surrender national life, that a few hundred thousand persons may extend and perpetuate slavery over the continent. My inheritance in Great Britain is to vindicate right against wrong. In this war I'm one with the nation, I humbly but very determinedly serve. Knowing that in this I serve my native England also. They tell me I'm of the race of the Luds of Lancashire, never willing servitors to injustice. If you be Abram Lud, is it becoming in one of the names to fight against the emancipation of slaves?"

"As Abram Lud, I rose against the mechanics who made machines starving to death a million of handloom weavers and their families; while denying to us, or to the sons of weavers, admission to machine-making shops as apprentices. I rose against capitalists who mercilessly crushed the life out of us, and against the rulers of the land who abetted the cruelty of capitalists. I'm logical. In England I asserted the right to rebel. In the States I assert the right to rebel."

"To which the other rejoined:

"If I be a Lud, El Abra, I am also logical. The Ludites rose against tyrannical combinations of mechanics and capitalists. I have drawn the sword in service of the United States against the cruellest combination which ever degraded labour."

"Listen, Captain of the Redbolts. You are a brave young hero. I admire you. El Abra, with his magnetic eye, his magical skill in fence, his muscular force of arm, would in that terrible combat have cut in pieces almost any other swordsman in the world. You are a young hero, I tell you. Nay, don't blush: you are dexterous, and brave, but you are not a Lud. There is not a drop of Lud blood in your veins. You are of good stock, nevertheless; a mixture of Scotch Ogleburn and English Lillymere. I am Irish O'Loney and English Lud, also good stock."

"You trifle with me, El Abra. What proof could you give that I am Lillymere?"

"My revered mother identified you by the marks you bear. Also, the Donna Euryntia, who loves you."

"Loves me! The Donna Euryntia loves me?"

"To distraction. She has taken the wrong side in this war, but means well. Yes, the