

CHAPTER II.

IT was Col. Clayton who had thus capitulated after the manner of man when his adversary is a lovely woman. His fine old country home is in the very heart of Kentucky's famous Blue Grass region. The house, with its broad verandas, its open doorways, its vine-shaded windows and pervading atmosphere of good cheer, suggested the hospitality for which it had been famed through generations. In its quaint architecture and delightful surroundings it told of refined taste and great wealth that had passed hand in hand through a long line of descent. From the commanding elevation crowned by the mansion, the great lawn sloped in grassy waves to the broad roadway in front and skirted the grove of native pines in the rear. In the meadows were the thoroughbreds such as have given the section a world-wide renown, ranging from the proud veterans that had won their laurels to the frisky youngsters that had yet to face the starter and prove their mettle. The army of servants, the stables, the training track and the kennel of hounds seemed an essential part of their environments, just as minor chords are essential to the most entrancing music.

Florence Worden, who had just wound the Colonel about her pink-tipped finger, as she always had done, was the daughter of his sister, whose death had followed quickly upon that of her gallant young husband. The Colonel's last words to her had been that Florence should be to him as his own child, and by this sacred promise he had brought the brightest and warmest sunshine into his own life. There are no fairer women than where the blue grass grows, and none of them were fairer than Florence had come to be. The best gifts of nature fortified her against the possibility of being spoiled; a truth sufficiently attested by the fact that the Colonel had failed to detract from her natural charms, though he had persistently violated most of the orthodox rules for the rearing of children. Her education had been directed by the Colonel's aunt, who had joined with him in resisting the attractions of matrimony and presided in his household. She had the old-school ideas of thoroughness and utility in the acquisition of knowledge, so that Florence had both the accomplishments of her sex as well as the