

JUST AFTER THE WAR.

A STORY OF THE SOUTH.

Written for The Weekly Sentinel by Eleanor M. Jones, of New Berne, N. C. Author of "Miss Littlejohn."

CHAPTER XII.

I'm practicing very hard for Easter. Its now the first of April, so its only three weeks off. I go nearly every afternoon to Mrs. Everest's now, as she says its important to be well drilled. Lots of the other girls go too to practice the carols.

One day last week, as I left there, I felt like taking a walk, and came around by Oakland, where the Livingstones live, that is when they're here, which is about once in twenty years it seems to me.

The house was all open, the first time since they've been away, and work seemed to be going on. My curiosity was excited, so I went up to the house, and asked a workman what it meant? He said the family were coming home soon.

Dear me just to think they've been gone this time, since I was five years old, that makes ten years ago. Mrs. Livingstone is dead, so there's only the old gentleman, and Miss Rebecca now in the family.

I've heard old Miss Polly Meggs tell their history many a time, its awful tragic. Miss Polly used to be the house-keeper up there, and when they went away, they gave her a little house to live in, right back of their home. She was sick a long time before she died, which was a short while ago, and mother used to send her soup lots of times, and I always used to want to carry it, because I wanted to hear her talk about old times.

The story went this way. Years ago when father and mother were first married, and Mr. Hugh Livingstone was just grown, there came a young man, a widower with a little boy, to be a teacher for Mr. Hugh's younger brother.

Now there was a young lady cousin, who lived in the Livingstone family, and every body said she and Mr. Hugh were to marry some day.

Well the teacher took mighty well with all the family, until he seemed to be one of them. At first he was sad and gloomy, mourning for his young wife but soon he became gay and happy.

People didn't talk when they all went on their long horse-back rides together. Mr. Hugh and his cousin, the teacher and his pupil were at length seen daily riding about, "then" Miss Polly said "folks' tongues were let loose, and they said Mr. Hugh had better look out." For Miss Polly also said "Mr. Hugh was ugly and awkward and by no means brilliant; had no accomplishments, while Mr. Deane was handsome, with graceful fascinating manners; could sing like a god, and was likely to captivate any young lady's affection.

Time rolled on, and a coolness sprang up between the teacher and Mr. Hugh. I suppose the lady told Mr. Deane she wasn't engaged, for he was devoted to her, but it all came to an end one day, when it was told that Mr. Deane had accidentally shot himself while out hunting, and sure enough he died at sunset, with his head resting on the lady's lap with his hand in hers, and as Miss Polly said, "look his love to the last, though too feeble to speak."

When it was all over; Mr. Hugh buried his ill will with his rival, and showed "the nobility of his nature" as people said, by taking little Emory and caring for him, as if he had been his own child, and his parents approved. Miss Polly said, "he was very tender with the little fellow, and always looked sad when he spoke of his dead papa.

Two years afterward, old Mr. and Mrs. Livingstone, and the younger son died of scarlet fever, and just before their sickness Mr. Hugh and his cousin were married. People did say "he won her love by his great kindness to little Emory Deane." Afterward when their little Rebecca came, folks said "there would be another romance between a Livingstone and a Deane," they expected it, because they grew up together, and the boy had his father's fascinating ways, and the girl a tiny image of her mother.

Sure enough, all the folks said this time came true, for when Rebecca was sixteen they were betrothed lovers, and strangest of all was the father's delight, who had so manifested his dislike to the elder Deane, who now showed such great gratification at the turn things had taken, and had all along encouraged it, and seemed anxious for them to marry.

Miss Polly said "he never appeared a happy man in his own wedded life, though fortune favored him in everything, except his wife's health who became very frail from her little one's birth, and never grew strong any more.

Young Emory Deane became a doctor and went to Europe to study. His mother had left him a little money, so he wasn't wholly dependent upon Mr. Livingstone for his education.

Once he came home to see his affianced, who was then eighteen, and one act in the tragedy took place, which revealed the other that had been performed.

It was told by the servants, that one

day, as he came from a walk, he rushed frantically into the room, where the family were sitting, and with a white set face (Miss Polly was present) accused Mr. Livingstone of having killed father in a duel, and of having provoked it.

They say, not Miss Polly, for she's never repeated the interview, that Mr. Livingstone uttered "my God who told you that?" and young Emory told how he had been urgently sent for that morning by an old man, who said he couldn't die contented until he made a confession to him, which was that his father died by Mr. Livingstone's hand, and not from any accident while hunting. That on that memorable day, unseen by any, but two servants who were sworn to keep the secret, the two men met by appointment, Mr. Livingstone having sent the challenge, and said, "the two could not live in this world together and love the same woman." Neither would give her up so it must be decided which should live and gain her hand.

They took their stand, and fired at the same moment. One fired in the air, while the other aimed at the heart and the victim fell. Mr. Deane died at sunset in the house of the man who had slain him, while he, branded as Cain, lived to win his cousin's love. This ended Emory Deane's recital, then t' was told a demon entered into his own soul and with bitter scathing words, he flung all of Mr. Livingstone's kindness to him into his teeth, saying it was only done as a penance to quiet a too tormenting conscience, and then and there he broke off all connection with the, to his family at least, fated house of Livingstone, declaring it impossible, with the present hatred to the name, ever to link himself to any-one in whose veins flowed the blood of his father's murderer, then away he rode and has never been here since, though its been seventeen years ago. That's the story and I know it by heart now, even in Miss Polly's language, who gave that interview, as others said it was.

Mother says she can't vouch for it all, but a great deal is true. Mrs. Livingstone became so gloomy after this and got into so much poorer health, that they broke up house-keeping, and travelled all over Europe, and died over there. Then Mr. Livingstone and Miss Rebecca kept on travelling, only coming back home for a short while to bury the wife. Now they say, his health has gotten to be so bad they are coming home for good.

I'm so glad; I want to see people living at Oakland; its such a grand old place it oughtn't to be deserted. A great big brick house painted red, with hundreds of oak trees all around it, and a long avenue of oaks leading down to the gate. I've always had a fancy I'd like to live there, it looks so grand and roomy.

The family are expected to arrive on Easter Eve, but I'm supposed to be too absorbed in my practicing to remember anything else. Its the eventful morning, and I'm so nervous I'm all in a tremor. I've sucked so many lemons, I feel like a vinegar barrel. I'm heartily thankful Aunt Priscilla doesn't believe in "fancy church music," as she calls it enough to go to our church to-day, she is such a critic. She and I don't agree in anything. She believes in work, work, work and never any play. Thinks I ought to cook, wash and iron for the whole family I believe. Belle pretends she's quite industrious, carries a piece of tancy work about with her, whenever Aunt Priscilla is around. For my part, I'm thinking practicing on Aunt side would do better than so much preaching. She's come to stay a long time it looks like.

I go to church and up into the gallery, and all the time, I feel as if I'm about to sink. Mrs. Everest is already there, looking so composed; she nods and smiles at me so kindly, I feel more composed myself. All I know and hear is when the service begins, that the flowers are deathly sweet, and the voices of the minister and congregation sound like they are getting fainter and fainter, as they float farther and farther away from me.

I'm frightened nearly to death during the opening piece, which we all sing together, but when the verse in the "Te Deum" is reached, which I have to sing alone, my lips felt literally pasted together, and my throat as dry as if it had been parched by a raging fever. I'm on the eve of giving up, and not trying, when Mrs. Everest touches me. I open my mouth, and make a violent effort. Out comes the voice, and it sounds to me like a gong its so loud, but it doesn't tremble, I'm thankful to know. When we finish and sent ourselves, I feel completely worn out. Mrs. Everest turns and says "splendidly," in a low tone.

While we were standing looking down upon the congregation below, I had seen a lady's head turn and a stranger's eyes glance at me when I began my solo.

Now that I'm seated, I leaned on the railing, and glanced down at the

different persons. In the Livingstones now are seated two ladies. One seems hardly older than I am. I wonder who she is, for I know she is too young to be Miss Rebecca. I have a side view of the face, but it is not the one that was just now turned towards me.

During the whole service my eyes are riveted on that pew. Somehow I seem fascinated; there's something strangely familiar about the other lady, which I can't find out.

I've grown calm again, and when we sing the last "carol," my voice sounds all right, I look at the strange ladies standing, and succeed in tracing the resemblance I found so hard to recognize from a back view. I don't think my own father could tell her from me. I've often seen my figure in the glass, and I'm certainly struck with the likeness.

In the last year I've grown a great deal, even outgrown Belle, in the last six months, which sets my mind at rest on the clothes question once for all. Am tall for my age, and will be fine looking, even Archie confesses, when I'm sort of planed down as he calls it.

When we come out of church, I join our family, who say I did well, and seem proud of me, so I feel quite important.

At dinner the whole conversation is about the Livingstones. Belle declares Miss Rebecca "positively homely." (Belle is getting Northern in her expressions, to suit Aunt Priscilla, but I don't care, not I) says "she has a muddy complexion," complains "that she is too dark," she herself being fair, its to her advantage to keep the blond type first in front of beauty.

Mother, who always finds something redeeming in everyone, thinks she is fine looking.

Jamie says, "she is handsome to him."

We all wonder who her companion was, but nobody knows, however we criticise her too, as she is fair Belle says "she is lovely."

Jamie says "she is beautiful, looks like an angel," a compliment, coming from matter-of-fact Jamie is so rare, that we all tease him; tell him he is smitten, at which his face turns red.

Mother and Belle call on the strangers in a few days, and come home thoroughly posted, as regards the unknown "fair one."

She is found to be a sort of "protage," as Belle calls it, of Miss Livingstone. She is an English girl, named Jessica Maxville, is very musical, and lives with Miss Rebecca for company. She likes my voice. Mother and Belle both notice the resemblance between me and Miss Livingstone. Mother tells me that she made inquiries concerning my music, and seemed astonished that I had had so few advantages.

[TO BE CONTINUED.] This story was begun in No 18 of the present volume of THE SENTINEL. Back numbers can be had at five cents each.

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